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THE

TRIALS OF THE CHURCH;

OR, THE

PERSECUTORS OF RELIGION,

BY

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TO

THE REV. MICHAEL MORIARTY,

ROCHDALE, ENGLAND,

THIS WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

It is a considerable time since the thought of writing this work occurred to my mind. I do not know how the idea originated. It was not that I had acquired an extensive knowledge of the subject, and wished to communicate it to others. In fact I knew little or nothing about it at that date. I had not till then read anything on the sufferings of the martyrs. In a vague, general way, I was aware that they had suffered much, that they had been highly honored by religion, and had borne the most brilliant and convincing testimony to the divinity of the Christian religion. But beyond that, I had no definite ideas regarding their numbers, their endurance, their virtues. It was only when I began to examine the matter attentively that its importance and excellence became known to me. I then, for the first time, learned to appreciate the services rendered to religion by these admirable champions of truth. I saw and acknowledged the nobility and grandeur of their character. I saw that in order to be true children of God, modelled after the character of the Redeemer, the spirit, the heroism and self-sacrifice of the martyrs must adorn and ennoble our entire being. And viewing the matter now in this light it is a wonder to me that so interesting

and inviting a theme should have been so entirely neglected by competent Catholic writers. But that it has is an unquestionable fact; for though in local and general histories attention has been directed to the sufferings of the martyrs, yet no continuous, unbroken account of what they endured has ever been published in English. This is the more to be regretted as no other subject exhibits the Christian in so favorable a light; no other subject places him before us so vividly, as the type, the embodiment of all that is noble, generous and heroic. But of this the reader will have ample opportunity of convincing himself in the body of the work.

I intended to append to this volume the apologies of the eminent writers of the first centuries. With this view I translated the defenses made in behalf of religion by Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, and Tertullian. But, at the suggestion of a friend, I have dispensed with these, inasmuch as their addition would render the work inconveniently large. Should the subscribers, however, desire it I will be happy to publish these defenses, in pamphlet form, at a future date. They are eminently worthy of the careful perusal of every thoughtful mind. Though written for other times and other wants they can with the greatest profit and advantage be studied and applied to present needs. In fact these defenses are masterpieces of reasoning and eloquence, and should be familiar to every one desirous of being able to defend his religion against the attacks of infidelity and heresy.

The object that I propose to myself being to give a general account of the sufferings of the faithful in every age, the reader will not expect to find in the work any relation of the sufferings of individual martyrs. To enter into such details would require much more space than the compass of a couple of octavo volumes. It would require, too, a far more extensive acquaintance with the subject than the writer can pretend to. In fact, the present volumes are merely intended as a brief summary of an almost inexhaustible subject. Their perusal may possibly lead some one with the necessary means and ability to give to the English-reading public, a comprehensive, detailed account of all that the Church has endured from the beginning down to the present; for, as has been remarked, no such work has as yet been produced.

Writing at such a distance from the great libraries of Europe, where advantages of an exceptional character are alone to be enjoyed, a liberal indulgence, it is to be hoped, will be generously accorded the writer. No available source of information however, as far as opportunities offered, has been neglected nor anything left undone to render the work as faithful and comprehensive a record as a brief summary of a great subject would admit.

While, as the reader will see, the martyrs of the Church of God are not the property of any individual age, race, or condition of life, it must be freely acknowledged that the children of the various religious communities for which the church is remarkable, have been especially distinguished

in this regard. They have most nobly and generously defended, with their lives, the doctrines of our holy religion. To such an extent is this true that it is in a measure startling to consider the numbers that have thus shed their blood in the cause of divine truth. Thus in one century alone, that is from 1234 to 1334, as many as 13,370 members of the Order of St. Dominic died for the faith.* And from 1500 to 1600 no less than 26.000 of the same Order received the crown of martyrdom,† while more recently still, that is within the last forty-two years, 55 Dominicans have been martyred in China.

It would be impossible, owing to the indifference and carelessness of these noble-hearted men to their own fame, to give anything like an approximately accurate list of the numbers of their brethren who have died for the faith. But from the instances given, it surely will not be considered an exaggeration to affirm that for the last 800 years between fifty and a hundred thousand of Saint Dominic's spiritual children have laid down their lives in defense of Catholic truth.

The same heroic spirit has, in like manner, animated the other religious communities. Their members, too, have readily and generously sacrificed their lives whenever duty or the interests of religion demanded the offering. Oftentimes it was on the very same battle-ground, side by side, that these chivalrous soldiers of Christ fell, nobly defending the doctrines of our holy religion. Thus of the

* A sketch of the Lives of the Dominican Missionaries in Japan by Father Wilberforce. † Life of Cardinal Howard, by Father Palmer, O. P., p. 36.

twenty-six religious martyred in Japan in 1597 by order of the cruel tyrant Taiko Sama, twenty were Jesuits and six, Franciscans. And in the great persecution of 1622, two Jesuits, four Franciscans and four Dominicans, died together, being burned to death at the stake. In all, on the Japanese mission, alone, of Dominicans and Jesuits, there received the crown of martyrdom as many as one hundred and seventy, one hundred and thirty being Dominicans, and forty Jesuits. Nor was it merely that these devoted men died, themselves, for the faith; but they inspired the same spirit into the hearts of their disciples. The extent to which they succeeded in this may be judged from the fact that in a single year, 1590, no less than 20,570 of the Jesuit converts in Japan laid down their lives for religion's sake.* In fine, it can be truly affirmed that the spirit of martyrdom has never been wanting in the Catholic Church. From the days of Christ, the prince of martyrs, down to the present, the blood of these faithful witnesses has never ceased to flow. So that it is not untrue to say, that in every age, our own not excepted, bishops, priests, and lay-persons have been cruelly butchered for the faith.

* The Japanese Martyrs by M. W. R., p. 17.

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CHAPTER I.

CHARACTER OF THE CONTEST ENGAGED IN BY THE CHURCH—COURAGE DISPLAYED BY THE FAITHFUL—ENEMIES RELIGION HAD TO CONTEND WITH—THEIR FAILURE—HOW PERSECUTION SERVED RELIGION—ROME FINDS AN INDOMITABLE ADVERSARY IN THE CHRISTIANS—CESSATION OF PERSECUTION IN ROME, NOT CESSATION OF PERSECUTION IN THE WORLD AT LARGE—THE EVIL ONE ENLISTS HERESY ON HIS SIDE—JULIAN THE APOSTATE'S ATTEMPT TO DESTROY CHRISTIANITY—THE HUNS, GOTHS, AND VISIGOTHS—GREAT DEFECTION IN THE 16TH CENTURY—PERSECUTION OF THE IRISH—CHARACTER OF THIS PERSECUTION—CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH RENDERED IT ONE OF THE GREATEST ON RECORD.

The contest between the Church and the world, of which I propose to give a brief account in the following pages, has been the most remarkable ever witnessed on earth. In its consequences and bearings upon society, apart from man's spiritual interests, it has surpassed everything that preceded or accompanied it. The area over which it has extended, the time through which it has endured, as well as the interests wherewith it has been connected, all signalize it as a contest of unequalled greatness, of unparalleled magnitude. The courage and heroism displayed on the one side by the members of the Church of God in upholding the doctrines of truth and maintaining the principles of virtue have never been equalled on any occasion by any body of combatants. The most sovereign contempt for suffering and the most reckless disregard for death have marked every phase and stage of this contest. And what is especially peculiar to it is that though unequal in numbers and wholly unarmed, except with such arms as the world

entirely ignores, the faithful have uniformly conquered. The failure in the first instance of the Jewish authorities to crush the infant Church, the still more signal failure of the pagan Roman rulers later on, together with the equally abortive efforts of numerous tyrannical monarchs in after ages, are ample evidence of this. Herein is to be found a subject for serious reflection, a problem the solution of which calls for special attention on the part of the infidel. For, humanly speaking, the Church was wholly unequal to the contest, and if she has succeeded against such powerful odds, it must be by a power superior to that of man. The success that she attained could not even be attributed to her origin or aims however exalted these may be, for, if deprived of the divine promise of perpetuity made her by God, she would, like so many merely human institutions of which there is record in the past, have long since given way before the power of the world; she would have fallen and disappeared from the earth. If the Church exists after so many trials, so many dangers and vicissitudes, it is because she is constantly supported and defended by the arm of the Most High, it is because the Almighty is ever her guardian and defender.

Commencing in Palestine, the cradle-land of this system of divine teaching, the contest was first local; it was restricted to the land of Judea. But though only local the storm was severe, and scattered the faithful in every direction. This, however, proved an advantage, for by it religion was propagated instead of being uprooted. As the seeds of plants, carried by the winds and borne to other lands, take root and fructify, so the first storms of persecution, instead of accomplishing the work for which they were intended, served only to carry and deposit in other regions the divine seed of the Gospel, thence again to be carried by other

tempests of a like nature, until the entire circuit of the earth had been traversed.

Baffled in his first attempt at destroying the infant Church of God, the evil one now summoned to his aid more powerful auxiliaries than the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities. These were the pagan Roman emperors. In them he found willing and able coöperators. With an energy and determination, second to none displayed in the conquest of their temporal possessions, the Roman Cæsars resolved upon banishing the Christian name and cause from the entire extent of their vast dominions. Humanly speaking, nothing seemed easier; the past history of the empire furnished an absolute assurance of success, for, had not the Roman rulers subjected to their authority the gods of one half of the globe? Was it not an acknowledged fact, that none could assume the title and role of a divinity without the permission and sanction of the imperial Roman Senate? Why hesitate then to believe that a power that could make and unmake the gods, that a power that had absorbed all the nations from the Caucasus to the Carpathian mountains would be unequal to the task of abolishing and blotting from existence a community without power or influence in the world to sustain it?

The edicts went forth; the imperial will was manifested throughout the entire extent of the empire. Jupiter, Apollo, Venus, or any of the other innumerable divinities then acknowledged by the State, might be worshipped with freedom; but not the Christ, the Redeemer of mankind. Christianity alone was forbidden and condemned by the law. Such was the will, such the orders of Cæsar. The Christians heard the announcement, but heard it undismayed. The consciousness of whose disciples they were, taught them wherein their power lay; Christ suffering on Calvary showed them how to conquer. The storm accord-

ingly burst over their heads divested of its ordinary terrors and unattended with its natural consequences. Ten times it reached a height, the force of which seemed to carry every thing before it, but as many times the faithful, sustained from on high, withstood its fury.

For the first time in the history of the Roman Empire an opponent was found whose arms were more than a match for the imperial battalions. Again and again the contest was renewed, but always with similar results: the Christians were ever victorious. Even locally the power of Cæsar was unable to conquer them. Four years of inexplicable torture, of continuous bloodshed and cruelty, and Nero became aware that he had in the humble but resolute Christians, a more powerful opponent than his predecessors in the government of the empire had had in the Greeks, the Carthagenians, the Gauls or the Britains—that he had, in a word, an unconquerable army. Rome indeed ran red with their blood; the populace grew merry over their torture; the provinces were strewn with their lifeless remains; but yet Rome remained the seat of their empire and the centre of their authority, while the empire at large was the theatre of their conquests. Yea, the very monarch who had doomed them to destruction, was necessitated to fly from before the face of his people, a fugitive and an outcast, while the faithful remained in possession of his capital. The very hand that had signed their death-warrant was subsequently employed in thrusting a dagger into the throat of its author. Was this conquest? Was it not rather defeat? Which was victorious? Nero, dying outside the walls of Rome, slain by his own hand, or the Christians still inhabiting the capital? Did any of the other tyrants succeed any better? Did Domitian? Were his last moments comforted by the assurance that his orders had been executed and the Christians exterminated?

Did not the contrary happen, for, does not history assure us, that at the very moment the fatal dagger was plunged into his heart by his treacherous attendant, the fourth in that marvelous succession of Pontiffs, beginning with Peter and continuing till Leo, was firmly seated in the chair of truth and legislating for the general interests of religion. Decius, Aurelian and Diocletian's efforts to destroy the Church of God were equally abortive. In fact the Christians grew in numbers and increased in virtue as the sword of persecution was drawn against them. Behold a noteworthy and undeniable fact in the history of the past, inexplicable on any other ground except that of the divine origin, and perpetual support, by the Most High, of the Christian religion.

To appreciate adequately the nature and extent of the resistance offered by the Church to her oppressors, it is necessary to keep before our minds the nature and character of the means employed for her destruction. And here it is to be remarked that power and conquest are co-relative terms. To resist the will of the ruler of Rome, was to resist the commands of the master of the world; it was to do what no other people from the confines of India to the shores of the Atlantic, had been able to effect. The Carthagenians indeed offered a bold and protracted resistance to their powerful adversary, but less than a generation was sufficient to reduce them to submission. Four years were all that were needed to conquer Gaul; one year was enough to obtain dominion of Syria; while a single battle at Cynocephali, in which the army of Philip was routed, and Macedonia lay at the feet of conquering Rome. It was the same through the whole of her subsequent history for generations. Conquest after conquest attended the progress of her arms all over the world, until at the moment she entered on her terrible conflict with the Christian religion,

her dominions embraced the greater part of the continent of Europe, a considerable portion of Asia and the entire seaboard territory in Africa, from the pillars of Hercules to the Arabian Sea. To offer a successful resistance to so formidable an adversary, it must be acknowledged, was no ordinary work. It required a strength and appliances greater than any that the world was able to furnish. These came from on high. To those who understood the character of the combatants and the exact value of their respective resources, the side that was certain to conquer was not for a moment unknown. To the faithful, the issue of the struggle was clear from the beginning. It might indeed be protracted through years, generations unborn might take part therein; it might be of the deadliest and most implacable character; the world might run red with the blood of the Christians, millions of their number might fall in the contest; but the end was certain to be as they anticipated—it was sure to be favorable to their interests. As a body they knew they would conquer, as an army they were certain of advancing and of never being beaten; for Christ their leader had said that the powers of darkness would never prevail against them. It was with this consciousness the Christians entered on the contest and encountered their adversary. For a time everything seemed to be against them. The numbers that fell in their ranks, the breaches made in their battalions and the apparently disorganized condition of their forces, made their oppressors believe that the Christians were conquered and that Christianity was a thing of the past. Hence, in his eagerness to proclaim to the world his victory, without waiting for a formal assurance of the fact, Cæsar imprudently ordered engraved on tablets of brass and set up through the extent of his dominions what history subsequently proved to be untrue, "Deleta est Christianitas," "Chris-

tianity is abolished." It was so only in the imagination of the ruler. A single generation, and that power that thus vainly and untruthfully vaunted its supremacy and unknowingly proclaimed its defeat, publicly acknowledged its error by placing itself under the guidance and authority of its adversary.

Thus eight generations had come and gone since the first notes of war were heard against the Christian faith throughout the extent of the Roman Empire. The contest was indeed unexpectedly long and severe, and when the end had arrived and peace was established, and the Christians stood forward, crowned with the laurels of victory, every one saw in the issue the realization of the words of the Redeemer, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The cessation of hostilities through the extent of the Roman empire by no means meant the cessation of persecution in the world at large. It was the theatre of the conflict but not the conflict itself that was abandoned. No doubt, a power that could rise superior to the most powerful then known, was not likely to be conquered by feebler agencies. But the tyrants of the world are blind. They have eyes and they see not, they have ears and they hear not. It is passion and not reason that determines their course. This was why Sapor, King of Persia, instigated by his Magi drew the sword of persecution at the beginning of the fourth century, and attempted to eradicate the Christian faith from the entire extent of his dominions. The failure of so many Roman rulers to effect the same within the limits of their respective authority might have taught him the impossibility of this. But like so many others he overrated his power and mistook his ability; nor was it until he had slain 200,000 of his unoffending Christian subjects that he became aware of this.

So far the enemy of mankind mainly employed for the

destruction of the Church of God the arms of physical violence, but to these he now added others of a different nature. Like a skilful tactician, he essayed at this juncture a two-fold assault upon religion. From without, he would attack the Church of God by physical violence, and from within, by the arms of perverted reason. The latter were adroitly employed and with much damaging effect by the heretical sectaries and especially by the Arian heretics who then disturbed the peace of the world. Aided by the secular power these infatuated innovators dealt such a blow to the Church of the Redeemer that for the moment, in the opinion of many, she seemed to be in danger of perishing. Never before did she pass through so terrible an ordeal, nor has she since. The whole world then seemed to be under the dominion of error. Every-where violence and heresy walked hand in hand through the empire. Gregory of Cappadocia, unlawfully taking possession of the See of Alexandria, at the head of an insolent rabble armed with all manner of weapons, is an instance of this. The same unhappy prelate scouring the provinces at the head of his armed supporters, perpetrating wherever he went the most shameful excesses, banishing, torturing and slaying, as his passions suggested, is a further evidence of the two-fold violence employed by the enemy of mankind at this juncture against the Kingdom of God.

Nor were these the only enemies that religion had to contend with at that period. Another now appeared on the scene, and in some sense a more dangerous and powerful one than any that had been encountered in the past. That was the apostate emperor Julian. The failure of physical violence as a means of destroying the Church of God, and the equally abortive efforts of so many heretical sectaries who till then had attempted, but in vain, to compass the same, taught Julian that if religion were to be overthrown it

should be by more powerful arms than those of violence and heresy. Hence the means he employed. Ignorance and degradation, he was of opinion, would do what violence and heresy had been unable to accomplish. Accordingly, he closed all the educational establishments of the empire against the Christian youth, debarring them at the same time from all posts of honor and emolument in the empire. A part of the project consisted in the intention to throw open the schools and academies at a subsequent date to the ignorant youth, when it was thought that the acknowledged prestige and preëminence of the pagan professors would be more than sufficient to cause their doctrinal systems to be accepted. This was a deep, diabolical scheme, and the quarter whence it emanated could not for a moment be doubted. It was the same as depriving one's adversary of his arms and then trying to slay him. But did Julian succeed? Far from it. Like so many others who had attempted the impossible he too found that he had essayed what was entirely beyond his strength. With his dying lips, on the battle-field of Persia, he acknowledged this, and regrettingly declared that Christianity had conquered.

It was now closing the end of the fourth century and already the Church had triumphed over a dozen powerful rulers and a far greater number of heretical assailants. By the blood and endurance of her faithful children she conquered the former, and by the ability, learning and wisdom of her doctors she overcame the latter. Her career in subsequent ages has been of a no less troubled and triumphant character. It could not be other, for her destiny has been to suffer, to be contradicted and to triumph.

From the death of Julian, A. D. 364, till the fall of Arianism in the middle of the seventh century, upon the conversion of the Goths to the Catholic faith, the Church of God was sorely afflicted in divers ways. Upon the break up of the

Roman Empire during the reigns of the Arian Emperor Valens, vast Scythian hordes under the distinctive appellations of Huns, Goths and Vandals poured down from their northern homes upon the fairest provinces of the nation, carrying fire and sword wherever they went. The first-named under Attila surnamed the Scourge of God, after successively overrunning the principal countries of Europe, laying in ruins the most flourishing cities of the empire, appeared in fine before the walls of Rome and were dissuaded from their purpose of destroying the proud capital of the empire only by the special interposition of Heaven. How many Christian churches were given to the flames and how many of the faithful died by the sword during the progress of this conquering barbarian, it would be impossible to say.

To the Huns succeeded the Goths, the Visigoths, the Lombards and the Vandals. As barbarians and heretics, these rude, untutored, savage invaders proved themselves the deadliest enemies both of the empire and religion. Under the last named, during the reign of Genseric and Huneric, the Church suffered the direst afflictions in Africa. The worst days of the Roman pagan persecutors were again revived. Catholicism was proscribed; the Churches were closed; the clergy banished and the people tortured and slain.

At the same time in the ancient kingdom of Armenia the Church was in like manner called upon to give evidence to her faith. Under the Persian monarch Hazuguerd every effort was made to destroy the faith in that land and when open violence was found insufficient to make the Catholics renounce their faith and to worship the sun, recourse was had to the tactics of Julian, and the weapons of heresy, in the shape of Nestorianism, were artfully employed against them. From another quarter too,

holy Church was called upon at that epoch to do battle against error and in defence of divine truth. A succession of tyrannical, heretical emperors on the throne of Constantinople added not a little to her troubles for centuries. Amongst these the names of the Isaurian and Copronimus will ever occupy dishonored places. Thus for fifteen centuries the Church was constantly in conflict with the world and the powers of darkness. To save the faith and discharge her obligations she had to make the most heroic efforts and the noblest sacrifices. Millions of the lives of her children as we shall see later on, was the price she had to pay for preserving to posterity the rich inheritance of the faith of Christ, and we, the children of the same mother, looking back upon the past and remembering all that our holy Church has thus done and suffered for the maintenance of divine truth and the preservation of virtue, cannot but feel profoundly moved and correspondingly rejoiced at her labors and her triumphs.

The Church's career from the beginning of the sixteenth century down to the present has been no less marked by opposition and contradiction. Enlightenment and civilization, as might be expected, have not lessened, but if possible increased the number and variety of her enemies. Still the power of Cæsar, still the weapons of perverted reason are employed against her. In vain she appeals to the past, in vain she points to the history of eighteen hundred years to show the inutility of seeking to effect her destruction. The enemies of religion blinded by passion and urged on by their own evil desires refuse to listen to reason. Thus persecution has continued and thus it shall continue till the end.

The great defection from the faith under the leadership of the apostate Augustinian was the keynote to a series of intolerant persecutions which have lasted even unto our

own days, and which in many particulars, the circumstances of the age and of the people being duly taken into account, have exceeded by far every thing that preceded them whether under the Goths, the Vandals or pagan Roman emperors. The chief theatre of the Church's conflict with the powers of darkness in this modern warfare has been Great Britain and Ireland, but especially Ireland. In the latter were perpetrated excesses and enacted cold-blooded scenes of atrocity which had better been blotted entirely from the pages of history, but which as a faithful expositor of the Church's afflictions it will be our duty to record in the body of this work. Nothing in the history of the past, except perhaps the sufferings of the Japanese Christians, can at all equal the sufferings of the Irish. In no other country, save the one indicated, has the number of the confessors and martyrs reached comparatively so considerable a figure, or where the sufferings of the people have been protracted through so lengthened a period. In other nations indeed the victims of persecution have been counted by millions, and their sufferings have been alarmingly great; but in Ireland and Ireland alone the contest has been unremittingly continued through centuries, and every conceivable agency brought into use for the destruction of religion. The endurance and sufferings of that race accordingly entitle the Irish to a prominent place in the grand army of martyrs that in every clime and from every people and in every age have testified at the cost of their lives to the faith of Christ.

A combination of circumstances served to make the persecution of the Irish one of unparalleled magnitude. These were difference of race, conquest and heresy. Alien in blood, sentiment and religion, every element that could add bitterness and ferocity to the contest was found combined in the minds of the persecutors. Even after the

contest had been partly abandoned, the sufferers were looked upon by their oppressors with mingled scorn and hatred.* The fact too that the Irish never admitted the loss of their national existence but ever struggled heroically against the invader engendered a hatred which combined with religious animosity led to the perpetration of deeds for which the annals of the world are unable to furnish a parallel. "All the cruelty inflicted on the city of Rome by Nero and Attila," says Dr. John Lynch, an eye witness of the Irish people's suffering, "by the Greeks on Troy, by the Moors on Spain, or by Vespasian on Jerusalem—all has been inflicted on Ireland by the Puritans. Nothing but that pathetical lamentation of Jeremiah can appropriately describe her state, 'with desolation is the whole land laid desolate.'" And again the same writer says: "All that has ever been devised by the ingenuity of the most cruel tyrants, either in unparalleled ignominy and degradation or in savage and excruciating corporal torture or in all that could strike terror into the fiercest soul—all has been poured out on Ireland by the Puritans. They plundered our cities, destroyed our churches, laid waste our lands; expelled our citizens from their walls, nobles from their palaces, and all the natives from their homes; nay they forbade countless numbers of men even to enjoy the sight of their native country and to breathe the air which they had inhaled at the moment of their birth. Some of our priests they put in chains and dungeons—that was the most lenient punishment; others they tortured with stakes and strappadoes; some were shot to death and others hanged or strangled. From the priests they turned their fury against all sacred things and places consecrated to the worship of God which were first sacriligiously pillaged, then all the paintings and images were torn, the

* See Lecky's Hist. of England.

statues were cloven in pieces with the axe and either thrown into the flames or consigned to stables and brothels. These temples where the priest performed his sacred functions, where the sacred canticles of the Church ravished the ears of the faithful, and sacred orators encouraged the people to piety by their ceaseless exhortations, where the people often poured forth their prayers to God and devoutly attended all the functions and mysteries of religion ; these now resounded with yells of drunkards, the neighing of horses, the barking of dogs, clamors of quarrelsome soldiers and the howling of women. Within these we now see taverns instead of altars, blasphemy for prayers, the cursings of heretics instead of pious and orthodox sermons, obscenity and impurities instead of chaste conferences."*

The persecution of the Irish may be said to comprise two distinct periods, the former commencing with the schism of the eighth Henry and ending with the Commonwealth, and the latter extending from that date till the passing of Catholic emancipation. The same agencies were not employed by the persecutors in both periods. The first was mainly characterized by physical violence—torture and bloodshed. Henry, Elizabeth, and James essayed to destroy the religion in Ireland by means of the sword. Charles and the Protector followed in their footsteps but with as little success, and when the sabre and the cannon were found unequal to the task a still more terrible agent in the shape of starvation was employed for that purpose. From the very beginning indeed the impossibility of wholly destroying the people by means of the sword, seems to have been realized by the oppressors. For as early as the commencement of the reign of Elizabeth it was barbarously contemplated to starve the nation to

* See Moran's Archbishops of Dublin.

death. Hollingshed, whose testimony cannot be open to suspicion, assures us that to this end the English commanders divided their armies into companies and marched through the country destroying the crops and the beasts wherever they went. "The harvest was taken from the natives, their cattle in great number preyed upon, and the whole country spoilt and burnt." To this they were urged by prominent English advisers, no less a personage than the poet Spencer having urged it on the Commanders of the English forces and the hoped for result he thus anticipatingly sketches in the following words: "The evil will be very short although there should none of them fall by the sword nor be slain by the soldiery. . . . They would quickly come themselves and devour one another." This was the means to be employed to rid Ireland of her Catholicity. It is difficult to conceive how so barbarous an idea could have been seriously entertained by a human being. Nothing like it was ever adopted by any pagan tyrant. Tortures indeed were employed and proscriptive enactments to destroy the faith of Christ in many lands; but to attempt to destroy the religion of a people by starving them to death is peculiarly English. It was not however merely suggested but acted upon in the most vigorous manner, and the result is best told in the words of him who counselled the atrocious proceeding: "out of every corner of the woods and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands for their legs could not bear them: they looked like anatomies of death; they spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrion happy where they could find them, yea, and one another soon after, inasmuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks there they flocked as to a great feast for the time, and not able to continue there long withal, so that in a short

space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country was suddenly *left void of man and beast.*"*

The account given in the foregoing of the deplorable condition to which the people were brought is not to be received with incredulity by the reader. For urged by a fanatical hatred of the Catholic faith every available means was employed by the oppressors to waste and destroy the substance of the people with the view of destroying the inhabitants themselves. Not only was the standing corn trampled under foot and cut with scythes supplied for that purpose to the British soldiers, before the time of maturity had arrived, but an instrument in the shape of a harrow was devised by which the tender blade after it had just appeared might be torn from the roots! Still a remnant of the people managed to exist, and to dispose of these the brutal resolution was arrived at of driving them into a corner of the island there to be starved to death. This was preëminently a Cromwellian idea, and was attempted to be carried into effect in as barbarous a spirit as it had been conceived. By the first day of May, 1654, all the Irish people were required to abandon their homes, and to retire to a barren mountain tract in the province of Connaught. Many obeyed and died of cold and hunger as had been anticipated and ambitioned, but many, on the other hand, refused to comply with the iniquitous demand, preferring to become outlaws and to live a precarious existence in their native mountains and within sight of their native homes. Thus the latter as well as the former attempt to starve the Irish people to death proved a signal failure. It was found as difficult to exterminate them by famine as it was by the sword. This the persecutors might have

* Spencer's State of Ireland, p. 166–7. See Moran's Catholic Archbishops of Dublin, p. 120.

readily known for never in the history of the world was there an instance of a tyrant succeeding in slaughtering or starving a nation as a whole. Thousands indeed perished by this horrible device, but yet a remnant of the people existed, and to rob these and their descendants of their holy religion, as they could not be entirely exterminated, has been the constant and unceasing endeavor of every English ruler, from Cromwell to William. The agencies employed, however, for the accomplishment of this purpose in this second period of persecution were entirely of a different character from those of the first. They were legislative enactments, but enactments of so inhuman and barbarous a nature as have never been framed by the legislators of any people. This is the sober and deliberate conviction of the most eminent and impartial writers, members too of the Protestant faith. "The sanguinary English code," says Johnson, "outstripped the ten persecutions inflicted by pagan Rome," on the early Christians. "It was," says Sir J. Barrington, "the most dexterous but atrocious ingenuity that ever stained the annals of legislation—a code which would have dishonored even the sanguinary pen of Draco." And a still greater authority, Edmund Burke, says of it that "it was a machine of wise and elaborate contrivance as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of the people and the debasement in them of human nature itself as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man." In fine the French jurist, Montesquieu calls it "a code conceived by devils, written in human gore and registered in hell."

Such was the character of the legislative enactments by which England, from the days of Cromwell, attempted to rob Ireland of the rich inheritance of the Catholic faith. Their principal features tended to degrade, impoverish and brutalize the Catholic people. They excluded them from

every honorable profession and pursuit in life, shut them out from official station and even forbade them an entry into the capital or corporate towns! They disqualified them from the purchase of land, denied them the right of worshipping the Almighty according to the dictates of their conscience, and finally forced them into compulsory ignorance. No wonder, under such circumstances, that the code aiming at and producing such deplorable consequences should be pronounced by competent authority to be one which "would have dishonored the sanguinary pen of a Draco." But as regarded its actual results we shall see its deplorable consequences in the second half of this work. Supplementing the opposition offered to religion by the monarchs of England during the period to which I refer were the persecutions undergone by the Church at the same time in the distant regions of the east, especially in the empire of China, in Japan and the Corea. Thus down to our own times when, at the very moment we are writing, numbers of faithful ecclesiastics under the arbitrary rule of an intolerant German monarch, and for no other crime than the assertion of the rights of conscience, are undergoing a painful incarceration in a felon's dungeon, the Church has never for a moment been wholly free from opposition and persecution.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHURCH NOT ONLY CONQUERS HER ENEMIES BUT CIVILIZES THE WORLD —SHE LEADS IN SCIENCE—SHE ESPOUSES THE CAUSE OF OPPRESSED HUMANITY—THE ENORMOUS PROPORTIONS THAT SLAVERY HAD ASSUMED —HOW THE CHURCH MET THE EVIL—THE CHURCH'S EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF WOMAN—PAGAN CIVILIZATION—HOW IT DIFFERED FROM CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION.

Not only did the Church conquer the numerous and powerful adversaries that attempted to obstruct her progress during the first centuries of her existence, but, while engaged with these in mortal combat, she was also occupied in carrying the light of civilization all over the world, not indeed by applying herself directly to the destruction of barbarism, but by the faithful discharge of her heavenly commission. For civilization, properly so called, has been begotten of divine faith; it is the child of Christianity as truly as that liberty is the offspring of civilization. Hence the church, while witnessing to divine truth, conferred also upon the nations of the earth the inestimable boon and the treasure of civil and religious liberty. "If you give the word 'liberty'," says one of the greatest of modern philosophers, "its reasonable, just, and beneficial signification then the Catholic religion may fearlessly claim the gratitude of the human race, for she has civilized the nations who embraced her, and civilization is true liberty."*

Europe is especially indebted to her in this respect, for by her noble endeavors and under her fostering care that quarter of the globe not only ceased to be barbarian,

* Balmes p. 50.

but became the mother and centre of enlightenment. This is freely acknowledged by the most thoughtful and careful historians and philosophers.* "No fact of history," says an eminent American writer," is better attested than that the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church alone, christianized, humanized and civilized the various European nations which occupy the first place in civilization, and from which we in America are descended. . . The deliberate verdict of modern history is, that the Catholic Church has been the mother of civilization, and it cannot be set aside by either self-glorifying ignorance or partizan prejudice."† The Catholic church did more; she saved the world at large from mere blind brute force. This is ungrudgingly conceded, even by her adversaries. Thus, referring to the danger that threatened the countries of Europe at the beginning of the fifth century from the incursions of the northern barbarians, that able statesman and philosopher, Guizot, says: "had not the Christian church at this time existed the whole world must have fallen a prey to mere brute force."‡

What is particularly characteristic of the Church, too, in her progress through time is the fact that, though constantly assailed and unremittingly at war with the world and the powers of darkness, she has yet uniformly led in the onward march of science and knowledge. She has ever held high the banners of learning and influenced the thought and speculation of every age. "The Church," says the last quoted author, "has exercised a vast and important influence upon the moral and intellectual order of Europe; upon the nations, and the sentiments and manners of society. This fact is evident: the intellectual and moral progress of Europe has been essentially theological. Look

* See Guizot, Schlegel, Hallam etc. † Hist. Prot. Ref. Spalding, vol. ii, p. 20.
‡ Hist. Civilization, vol. i., p. 54.

at its history from the fifth to the sixteenth century and you will find, throughout, that theology has possessed and directed the human mind; every idea is impressed with theology; every question that has been started, whether philosophical, political or historical, has been considered in a religious point of view. So powerful indeed has been the authority of the church in matters of intellect, that even the mathematical and physical sciences have been obliged to submit to its doctrines."* In short the church's cloisters have ever been filled with a body of holy, devoted men whose natural ability and vast attainments in every branch and department of knowledge and science, have earned for them the proud title of the master minds of their respective countries, and the leaders of the human intellect in their various ages. Such were the philosophers Athanagoras, Aristides, Justin Martyr and Ireneus of the second century; Origen, Tertullian and Lactantius of the third and fourth; Jerome, Basil, Ambrose, Augustine and a host of others later on, and continued down to our own days so that the author of European Civilization has judiciously remarked that "No one who has studied the history of letters can deny that the Church has in all ages possessed men illustrious for science."

Again when in the course of time men led astray by the false principles of an unsound philosophy were on the point of embracing a doctrine which if accepted and reduced to practice would have thrown the world back into its original barbarism, it was the church that once more came to the aid of society, interposed her authority and saved the dignity and freedom of the nations by saving divine truth.† Europe thus owes a twofold debt of grati-

* Guizot, p. 136—137.

† "The Church by repudiating the destructive errors taught by Protestantism preserved society from being debased by these fatalistic errors."—Balmes.

tude to the Church of God, one in having drawn it out of barbarism, and another in having saved it from falling back into its original condition.

The Church did still more, she struck the chains off the limbs of numberless slaves, she ameliorated the condition of those whom she could not wholly set free, while, in behalf of the weaker sex, she elevated woman from her lowly, downtrodden condition as man's reputed inferior and raised her to her proper sphere and condition in society as man's copartner and coequal before God and the world. Had the Church done nothing more than this for the human race she would indeed be entitled to the gratitude and admiration of all mankind for all time.

And in order to appreciate this great fact at its proper value it is necessary to understand the abject condition of men in their capacity as slaves when the Church appeared upon earth and took upon herself their moral and civil regeneration. Words are inadequate to convey to the mind of the reader an accurate idea of this. The slave at that time had no rights, no privileges, no prospects in the near or distant future. He was a chattel, a thing and not a man. No principle was more generally taught, accepted and acted upon by the great and noble than that the slave was an inferior being—a creature destined like the beast of burden to minister solely to his master's needs and pleasures. The entire system of servitude prevailing in those ancient times was based on this erroneous, iniquitous principle—the inequality between man and man, or the superiority of the master over the slave as a human being. Not only was this accepted and reduced to practice by the governing body, but it was taught and inculcated by the profoundest and most enlightened philosophers of the age. Plato and Aristotle gave it their sanction and approved it. "Let any one who wishes," says the former, "provided he

is in his senses, take his own slave and treat him as he pleases."* Entire liberty was thus conceded to the owner to treat his unhappy slave as he would his ox or his ass; he had absolute dominion over him even to the taking of his life—a right not unfrequently reduced to practice. Aristotle is even still plainer and more emphatic when he says, in reference to the respective relations of man and master: "This will fully explain what is the nature of a slave and what is his capacity; for that being who by nature is not his own but totally another's, and yet is a man, is a slave by nature; and that man is the property of another who is his *mere chattel* though he is still a man."† Thus the teaching of philosophy, combined with the power of the rulers, reduced one half the human race to the condition of the brute beast. It remained, then, for the Church as the herald of salvation and the friend and champion of the enslaved to raise her voice and proclaim for the first time in ages the grand and ennobling doctrine of man's equality. This, by virtue of her mission she was necessitated to do; she could not avoid it, for liberty was inscribed on her banner. She came to combat and overcome, as far as in her power lay, the evils and consequences of the first man's transgression, and slavery was an outcome thereof. It was born of avarice, it was begotten of tyranny, it was the child of pride. As such the Church had to attack it, it was her mission, she could not do less; for on her lips and in her maxims were the words liberty, freedom, redemption. This the apostle expressed when he said, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."‡ And writing to the Colossians he enunciates the same in the following words: "where there is neither Gen-

* Plato on the Laws, vol. v., p. 458.

† Aristotle's Politics, book i, ch. iv.

‡ S. P. Gal., ch. iii., v. 28.

tile nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian nor Scythian, *bond* nor free, but Christ is all and in all."* Thus holy Church recognised no difference, as indeed there is none, between man and man in our common nature—in our humanity as children of the same common parent. All were redeemed by Christ and all became through his saving merits children of the most high and heirs to his heavenly kingdom. This was what the world was unprepared to hear. All over the earth and for centuries the contrary principle had been taught and held. It was maintained and enforced by intellect and power; philosophers and statesmen alike had endorsed and accepted it. Hence the opposition in which the Church found itself to the teaching, the prejudices and interests of all that was then great, noble, intellectual and influential on earth—in opposition to the maxims, the customs and cherished associations of centuries.

The prodigious proportions, too, at which the system of slavery had arrived when the Church appeared on the scene and interposed her authority in behalf of degraded humanity is also to be taken into account when considering the measure of gratitude that the world is indebted to religion for on account of its efforts in enfranchising suffering mortals. According to the most moderate estimate there were then within the limits of the Roman Empire alone as many bondmen as freemen, that is in all probability between fifty and sixty millions of slaves. But slavery was not confined at that or any preceding date to the Roman empire. It prevailed throughout the world at large; it was the slave who raised the lofty pyramid, who cast high and suspended in mid-air the hanging garden, who constructed the extensive aqueduct and formed the useful canal. Heliopolis, Babylon and Rome bore ample testi-

* Col., ch. iii, v. xi.

mony in the number and magnitude of their edifices to the presence and number of their slaves. In a word one half or nearly one half of the children of men were deprived of their natural and national rights in order to minister to the passions, the pleasures and wants of the other half.

It is true a faint voice was heard in behalf of this down-trodden portion of humanity before Christianity had yet fully applied itself to the work. To the preceptor of Nero, the philosopher Seneca, is indeed due the honor of having effected a slight amelioration in the condition of this class, for he obtained the appointment of a judge to take cognizance of their plaints. To the emperor Antoninus Pius, too, is due the honor of having secured to these outcasts a guarantee for their existence, in that he withdrew from their owners the absolute right of life and death which they possessed over them. It was, however, reserved to the Church, the true friend of man, to enunciate the grand, ennobling principle which the world has not even yet thoroughly comprehended, that there is no difference between man and man—between Greek and Roman. To carry this principle into effect in all its entirety, was to be the work of time. All that the Church could do at first was to accomplish the moral regeneration of the sufferers, leaving to time to produce the civil effects necessarily connected with the principle of natural equality. Hence the counsel of the apostle that those who were in a state of subjection and deprived of their liberty should for their souls' sake profit of the situation by remaining contented, remembering that the truest of liberty consists in being delivered from the thraldom and slavery of sin and made heirs and children of God. "Let every man abide in the same calling in which he was called. Wast thou called being a bondman? Care not for it; but if thou mayest be

made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a bondman, is the freeman of the Lord. Likewise he that is called, being free, is the bondman of Christ. You are bought with a price, be not made the bond slaves of men."†

If Christianity did not proceed farther at first than the enunciation of the great truth contained in the words of the Apostle,‡ it was not that her principles and teaching were at variance with those she set forth at a subsequent period. By no means. For in the doctrine laid down at the commencement were contained the principles and germs of that liberty which in subsequent times she succeeded in obtaining for all. And indeed as soon as she found herself in a position to do so she interposed her authority between the oppressor and the oppressed, and proclaimed in the most positive and unmistakable language her abhorrence and detestation of the system. This is to be encountered in numerous canons from the days she emerged from the Catacombs down to the present. Nor were her efforts long without producing the most admirable fruit, for by making the manumission of the slave a duty and religious obligation on the master she secured unto millions the freedom which they otherwise would never have obtained§ while at the same time her prudent and persistent determination in the like direction succeeded, eventually, in influencing the legislation of the times by obtaining for the

† Corinthians, ch. vii., p. 20-23.

‡ S. Paul, Gal., ch. 3, v. 28.

§ "The Church made the manumission of slaves a religious duty and a religious service.—Before the altar of sacrifice the master pronounced these words 'in the name of God, and for the good of my soul, for the redemption of my sins, and in the hope that the Lord will deign to pardon me, I set at liberty my slave named M or N. From this day let him be free as if he had been born of free parents. Let all that he can gain and accumulate by his work and by the grace of Christ be his property.'" Civilization and the See of Rome, a lecture by Lord R. Montagu, M. P., p. 13.

slave a recognition of natural and political rights.* The Church did more than this. She purchased out of her own limited treasury for the unfortunate the liberty she was otherwise unable to obtain for them. And when temporal resources had failed her, urged on by her burning zeal and enthusiasm in behalf of the afflicted, she instituted a body of religious whose object should be the redemption of captives even at the cost of their own personal freedom if needed. From these constant and devoted exertions on the part of the Church of God slavery came to be very considerably diminished, so that at the beginning of the 11th. century a large portion of Europe was freed from the abomination. Five hundred years later owing to the unremitting exertions of churchmen it disappeared entirely from the Christian nations of Europe. But unhappily greed and avarice revived in the new, what religion and humanity had abolished in the old world. Spain was the first to introduce this unworthy system into America, but as time went on it was extended to the other national possessions, and English colonists also came to share in the shameful traffic. It is only fair, however, to acknowledge that this was not with the approval and sanction of the English monarch; yet the nefarious business went on and to such an extent that down to the abolition of the system as many as 30,000,000 of unhappy captives were thus imported into the country in the capacity of slaves![†] The church, meantime, never failed to raise her voice against the cruel injustice. She and she alone proved the unvarying friend of the bondmen. In 1537 the system was condemned by Paul III., in 1639 by Urban VIII., later on in

* Le Christianisme adoncit aussi la législation civile à l'égard des esclaves. Constantin le Grand transfera l'enquête sur les plaintes et les delits des esclaves à un juge spécial, frappa de peines graves les cruantes commise envers eux défendit de les crucifier, &c.—Goshler, vol. viii. p. 34.

† See Goshler, vol. viii., p. 38.

1741 by the illustrious Benedict XIV., and finally in our own generation, in 1839, by Gregory XVI., who in an Encyclical dated 3d. December declared the traffic in slaves as illicit and earnestly exhorted all Christian men against engaging therein. Thus, for the last 1800 years the Church, faithful to her principles and heavenly commission as the moral and civil regenerator of the human race, never allowed an opportunity to escape without raising her voice in behalf of the disfranchised, and ameliorating as far as was in her power the condition of the unfortunate.

The Church's efforts in behalf of woman were equally meritorious and praiseworthy. Before the advent of the Christian religion on earth the weaker sex everywhere occupied a subordinate position. Woman was universally degraded, despised, and regarded as man's inferior. She had no rights, no privileges. Like the slave, her business was to contribute to man's pleasure and enjoyment, and in fact where Christianity has not yet been received she continues to occupy this unworthy and unnatural position. Such is her actual condition, not only among the more savage and barbarous tribes of the earth, but among the more enlightened and civilized heathens of the world, as the Turks, the Hindoos, and the Chinese. With these, woman is still a plaything—a puppet in the hands of her lord and master, but by no means his equal. She is not even supposed to have a soul, and if a place is assigned to her in heaven it is because man's, and not woman's, requirements demand it.* In a word, till the advent of Christianity, woman everywhere occupied a dishonored condition and endured a deplorable servitude. Even where civilization had attained its highest proportions, within the limits of the Roman Empire, her condition was little if anything better. Here, she was wholly at the mercy of her partner; he had the

* See the Koran.

right of life and death in her regard. He could do with her as he pleased, in fact he possessed her as he did any other part of his property; for in the eye of the law she was not a *persòn* but a *chattel* or thing. And so true was this that if the husband were unable to establish the marital contract, the use and possession of the wife, as of anything else, for a year made him her absolute owner. And not only the civil jurisprudence but the religious systems of the nations tended in the same direction and contributed powerfully to the degradation of woman. What better proof need be offered for this than the illicit amours of the gods —Zeus for instance begetting children of his mother Rhea and his daughter Korė, Thyestes deflowering his own child, and Venus yielding to the desires of Anchises. In fine, the impure loves of these deities, while condoning crime and arousing the baser passions of men, tended directly to render woman a victim and a slave. Was it any wonder, then, that the world should have been the theatre of the most reprehensible crimes and the most shameful debauchery?

How did Christianity meet this terrible evil? How did it withstand the fierce passions of men? It began as in the case of the slave by proclaiming the grand truths of the unity of the human race, and the perfect equality of all in origin and destiny, regardless of sex or race. Woman was thus at once elevated to a higher plane than she had ever occupied. She was made man's equal in all things, both by nature and grace—the former by reason of the unity of the species, and the latter by virtue of the sacrament of regeneration whereby she was incorporated into the body of the faithful and made a child of God and heir to heaven. The old system of the world's teaching on this point thus received a shock from which it never recovered. Man saw at once by the light of this new doctrine that he was not the sole master of all. It was not, however, without a strug-

gle, a contest protracted through ages, that this sublime teaching was forced upon the attention and acceptance of the world. Nor would it ever have been thoroughly admitted only for the unity of the marital contract. Monogamy, and monogamy alone, made woman in the eyes of the world what God and nature had destined her to be—the co-partner and co-equal of man. It required much effort and much determination on the part of the Church to get this admirable and heavenly teaching accepted. It was indeed the greatest barrier against the acceptance of her message of divine truth to the nations of the earth. Men would conform in many things to the dictates of reason, they would willingly listen to the Church on many of her doctrinal points; but to place a salutary restraint on their irregular passions and lustful desires, was what demanded an effort more than their natural powers were equal to furnish. It required the aid of divine grace. But the Church was inexorable, she would listen to no compromise on the point; for it was the Master who ordained it. "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." * Here, then, was what practically raised woman from her degraded condition and placed her in the position she occupies to-day, on the plane of equality with man in all the civilized nations of the earth. Rather than violate the rights of a single woman in this regard, holy Church would and did allow millions of her children to be torn from her embrace, for she had no such compromising doctrine as that of the sectaries, which suffered a dissolute monarch to take to himself a plurality of wives.

Thus, while holy Church was fighting for her own exist-

* Mathew, ch. xix, v. 5-6.

ence, and regenerating the moral condition of the world, she was also engaged in ameliorating man's civil condition, striking the chains off the limbs of numberless captives, and obtaining for woman a recognition of the rights which God and nature intended she should enjoy.

I said above that the civilization of Europe was the work of the Catholic Church. It may occur to the reader to enquire if civilization had not already acquired a high degree of culture and refinement in that quarter of the globe. It had; but it was of an entirely material character, it was not true civilization. It lacked its essential elements. It had no heart, no soul, no moral perceptions. The works of benevolence found no place in its system—charity was unknown to it. Marvelous works of art indeed, many of which subsist even yet, were the product of that civilization. It produced a Phidias, an Apelles, a Praxiteles, but it had no John of God, no Vincent De Paul, no De La Salle. It was, in a word, a civilization without charity, without benevolence, without humanity. Nothing better illustrates this than the fact that amid the monuments of antiquity there is not one the mouldering ruins of which declare it to have been destined to the alleviation of human affliction. There are no ruins of hospitals, no remains of asylums, no evidence of places of refuge for the aged, the feeble and the indigent of those times. Exquisite works of art there are to be sure, columns, statues, obelisks, fragments of classic literature; but nothing more.

The chief characteristic of pagan civilization, then, was that it was material. And it was material in the worst and most reprehensible sense. Alongside the highest expression of genius is to be found the grossest representation of vice, the truest embodiments of cruelty, of avarice and of the most shameful impurity. Did not one half the people then keep the other half in bondage, were not the rights

of woman, as we have seen, wholly ignored, and did not the very system of divine worship by the deification of the passions become a vehicle and school for vice? Was not drunkenness adored in the person of Bacchus, violence and bloodshed in that of Mars, and the foul passion of lust in the homage rendered to the lewd deity Venus? Who would dare describe the shocking abominations of the worship of the Grecian Aphrodite, of the Phœnician Astarte, or of the Assyrian Melitta? Do not the wailing and lamentations of the countless deflowered virgins who retired from the rude embraces of the attendants of these deities, still strike upon our ears and imperatively command us to set our seal of condemnation upon a system of civilization which not only permitted but commanded such atrocities. The names of Paphos, Gnidos and Daphne may be mentioned, but the history of those luxurious retreats cannot be recounted without exciting a blush on the cheek of the reader. Was it any wonder, under such circumstances, when religion lent its influence to the sustainment of such horrible depravity, when the passions were deified and the very gods themselves played the most censurable parts, that the world became wholly corrupt, that men lost the very first instincts of modesty, and that obscenity was everywhere encountered in public and in private? Sanctioned by religion, approved by the gods and endorsed by the powerful, immodesty stalked unblushingly forth through the community, it obtruded itself upon the attention of all. It was paraded in the theatres, it was encountered on the highways, it was present at the festive board. Against this outrage upon decency and our common humanity, there was no one to raise his voice and utter a condemnatory sentence. On the contrary everything and everyone added to the evil and fanned the more vigorously the flames of the impure passions that then burned so fiercely in the breast of society. The liter-

ature of the time played the same ignoble part, it was of the same unworthy character, and became the more acceptable because of its greater obscenity. The public games and amusements were of a like nature. I do not speak of the infamous Lupercalia and Floral celebrations in honor of Pan, where every sense of honor and modesty was publicly outraged; but I refer to those ordinary celebrations in which the people spent their hours in what might be regarded as legitimate recreation. And what is especially noteworthy in this, is the fact that the ribaldry and obscenity indulged in, on these occasions, were for the most part leveled against the objects of divine worship themselves, thereby doubly degrading and debauching the minds of the people. Of this the rhetorician Arnobius gives us the most undoubted assurance when he says in his argument against the religion of the Gentiles: "The gods alone are so vile, contemptible and dishonored, that you grant any one leave to cover them with all the ribaldry the filthiest fancy can bring forth. This your poets perform to your entire satisfaction, and, therefore, you admire and praise them for their divine genius. Your pantomimes, comedians and mimics, and a whole tribe of most dissolute actors, give you life-like embodiments of these miserable fables, and perform in your presence those very feats of guilt which the poets attribute to your gods."

How, under such circumstances, could society be moral, when the worst and most reprehensible immodesty was not only constantly represented before the eyes of the community, but even inculcated and enforced by the conduct and action of the gods. And what is true of this vice of impurity in regard to the people of that age, is equally true of the other excesses into which the world then plunged. Hence the free application of the words of Lactantius declaring the impossibility of the existence of virtue amongst men who

suffered themselves to be guided by such rules; "It is easy to see that the worshippers of the false gods could not be good or upright men. For how could they be expected to keep from shedding human blood, who worshipped gods that shed blood as did Mars and Bellona? How could they spare even their own parents, who adored Jupiter who drove away his own father? How could they be merciful to their own infant children, who venerated Saturn, the devourer of his children? How could purity have any value in the eyes of those who paid divine honors to a naked adulteress who had been nothing more than the common victim of the lusts of all the gods? How could rapine and fraud be avoided by men who knew the thefts committed by their god Mercury? He moreover taught them that cheating was not fraud but smartness. How could they restrain their passions, who venerated Jove, Hercules, Bacchus and Apollo as gods, while their lusts and frightful lasciviousness of every blackest dye were not only known to the learned, but brought upon the stage of the theatres and made the choice material of songs, that every one might the more surely know them? Could men, however good naturally, be good under such training; be upright while taught injustice by the gods? To appease the god you adore, you must do the things you know to be pleasing and agreeable to him. The most devout worshippers are those who seek to imitate their god; and thus truly did the worship of the gods destroy the morals of the heathens."

In short the civilization of that time was, as we have affirmed, wholly material and as such lacked the first elements of true civilization. It was hard hearted and cruel: it had no sympathy for the aged, no compassion for the young; *both* alike became its victims. The former when past their time of usefulness were cast forth and allowed to perish

miserably of want,* while the latter were abandoned by their unnatural mothers and suffered to be devoured by birds and beasts. But was there no provision made by the State for such objects of charity? None. Paganism was not conscious of the meaning of the word charity, it knew not in what benevolence consisted. Hands there were, indeed, to gather up the little abandoned outcasts, but for what purpose? The soul sickens at the recollection of what they were destined for. It was to swell the ranks of the slaves and of the prostitutes! From such civilization, from such degradation and unhallowed influences, the Church of God rescued men, and delivered the world, and this she did while combating for her own existence.

* Triumph of the Catholic Church, by Ambrose Monahan, D. D., p. 134-135.

CHAPTER III.

PERSECUTION A PROMINENT FEATURE OF CHRISTIANITY—THE LIGHT IN WHICH IT REPRESENTS MAN TO US—WHO THE MARTYR IS—HIS SERVICES TO THE CHURCH—HOW HE CONQUERS—WHENCE HE OBTAINS HIS FORTITUDE—HE IS A WITNESS—THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF DESTROYING THE CHURCH BY MARTYRING THE FAITHFUL—HOW THE ACTS OF THE MARTYRS HAVE BEEN OBTAINED—GREAT HEROISM OF THE MARTYRS—CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THE MARTYRS DIE.

The persecution of the Catholic Church by her enemies is a prominent feature in the history of Christendom. It is a historic fact which earnestly solicits the attention of every serious mind. As a record it puts before us an account of unparalleled patient endurance and most unreflecting intolerant zeal. It represents man to us in his best and worst capacity, in the most favorable and unfavorable light. It holds him up to our admiration as a champion of virtue, a hero in the cause of divine truth, defending at the cost of his blood, the most sacred principles of religion. And on the other hand it exhibits him to us as a creature of passion, blinded by rage and hurried on by the violence of his passions to the commission of the most reprehensible crimes. On the same page, and side by side, we accordingly encounter in this narrative, great virtue and great vice—most patient endurance and most impetuous unrelenting rage. In the former we behold the power of truth and in the latter the weakness of error.

As a characteristic, the persecution of the Church establishes more satisfactorily than anything else, the sincerity of man's belief, and the truth of his religious profession;

for what men die for they believe in, while what 1800 years of combined, unceasing effort on the part of the world has been unable to destroy, must be more than human—it must be divine. Other organizations have indeed been opposed, and in consequence have disappeared from amongst men. But the Church is as powerful to-day as it was in the beginning. It has never yielded to violence, nor been driven from the path of duty by oppression. Its destiny, like its divine founder, has been to suffer and to conquer, for suffering in its case means triumph. Of this the countless martyrs now in heaven, who constitute the Church triumphant, are an irrefragable proof. The history of the persecution of the Church, then, is not a record of sorrow from which the mind would readily turn. It is not a page of heartless inhumanity, unrelieved by any of the nobler and finer instincts of our nature. On the contrary it is a chapter of the brightest and most ennobling virtues, wherein fidelity of purpose, and heroism in the most sacred of causes is everywhere to be encountered. Thus, what might seem unattractive at first, will be found, when seriously considered, to be worthy of our highest regard and special attention.

The martyr is, indeed, the highest type of the Christian man. He is the most perfect of the followers of the Son of God, for his state is one of absolute perfection: "perfecta sanctificatio in martyribus," says St. Augustine. In no other is charity found in so excellent a degree. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—John, ch. xv., v. 13. And the same beloved apostle says in his first epistle: "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him,"—St. John, 1st epis., ch. iv., v. 16. Hence, the declaration of St. Paul, when he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword?

As it is written: For thy sake we are put to death all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we overcome because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans, chap., viii., v. 35–39. In the foregoing, the apostle enumerates all that was best calculated to detach him from the service and love of his creator, and by consequence, the triumph over which must have earned for him the highest degree of merit. Neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor danger, nor persecution, nor the world, he declares, was sufficient to deprive him of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. No one comes nearer to the true character of the Son of God, then, than he who has been tried by suffering, than he who has trodden the bloody road to Calvary. Christ was the first and the greatest of the martyrs in the new dispensation, and those who follow the more closely in the footprints of his passion shall be entitled to share the more largely in the glory of his triumph.

If the memory of illustrious patriots who have died in behalf of the liberties of their native land in defending the principles of justice, be dear to posterity; if their heroism, their self-sacrifice and devotion are ever the subject of praise and eulogium on the part of the world, how much more should not the heroism and devotion of those who have died and conquered in the interests of religion evoke the praises and admiration of all sincerely believing Christians. This is why the Church, in honoring her faithful children, has ever given the foremost place to those who have shed their blood in her sacred cause. "Martyres

namque in ecclesiis locum summum tenent, atque apice sanctæ dignitatis excellunt." * "The martyrs occupy the first place in the Church and excel all others in dignity."

Her object, too, in especially honoring their memories and commemorating their virtues is to encourage her children to imitate their example and to walk in their footprints. "Populus autem Christianus memorias martyrum religiosa solemnitate concelebrat et ad excitandam imitationem et ut meritis eorum consocietur atque orationibus adjuvetur."† "The Church celebrates with religious solemnity the memory of the martyrs with the view of inciting the faithful to an imitation of their deeds, and that they might be united with them in merit and aided by them by prayer."

In acting thus the Church is also moved by the principle of gratitude, for deprived of her martyrs she would be stripped of half her glory. It is to these, under God, that she is especially indebted for the establishment and maintenance of divine truth all over the world. For by these more than by any others her sacred cause has been most valiantly maintained, her liberties most chivalrously defended, and a body of testimony added to the other proofs of her divinity which no cynicism can gainsay and no understanding can fail to comprehend. The martyr in the midst of his torments and sealing the sincerity of his belief by the effusion of his blood, is the author of an argument in favor of religion far more convincing than any that could be addressed to our understanding through the cold medium of philosophical reasoning, In his blood we read the reality of his conviction, and in his endurance we recognize the power of the Most High. In effect, this was the argument given to the world at first, and which more than anything else directed the attention of paganism to Christianity in the primitive times, and favorably disposed

* Augustine, vol. 4, p. 835. † Ibid.

the unbelievers to the acceptance of the doctrines of Christ. It was at the feet of the martyrs, after a bloody and protracted contest of three hundred years, that the pagan Roman tyrants laid down their arms and acknowledged the supremacy of the Church of Christ. It has been under the ægis of the martyrs, too, that Christianity has been introduced into almost every country of the world, as it certainly has been by their indomitable courage and unshrinking endurance that the faith has been nobly defended and carefully preserved all over the world. For where is the country in which religion has not been tried by the sword and where is the land that has not conquered in the blood of its martyrs? "Repleta est terra martyribus."* "The world, is filled with martyrs." And in regard to their conquest the same holy doctor says: "Ubi usque ad sanguinem certamen, ibi gloriosissima et plena victoria."† "When the contest has been with blood, the victory is glorious and complete."

It is true, it is not man but God who conquers in this instance. If the martyrs despised the cruelties of their tormentors, if they overcame the powers of darkness, if they resisted successfully the blandishments of the world if they were faithful in chains and constant even unto the effusion of blood, it was because Christ, whose cause they had espoused, lived, reigned and conquered in them.

But what is it to be a martyr—who can lay claim to this glorious title? Not certainly all who suffer, for then those who receive the just punishment due to their crimes would be deserving of the name. Then, as Augustin remarks, the great enemy of mankind might justly and for the strongest of reasons lay claim to the title. A martyr is one who dies for justice sake, "Martyr dicitur qui propter justiciam exciditur."‡ "The martyr is one who

* Augustine, vol. 5, p. 151. † Ibid vol. v. p. 1291. ‡ Augustine.

is slain for justice sake." Hence outside the Catholic Church there can be no true martyrs. "Charitas deest passio nihil prodest."* "Where charity is wanting suffering profiteth nothing." And in more explicit terms still: "Foris autem ab ecclesia constitutus et separatus a compagine unitatis et vinculo charitatis æterno supplicio punieris *etiamsi pro Christi nomine vivus incendereris:*" † "Outside the Church, and unaffected by the bond of unity and the bands of charity you shall suffer everlasting punishment even though you should be burned alive for the name of Christ." It is not the suffering, then, alone, but the suffering and the cause united that constitute the martyr. "Nemo ergo se extollat et glorietur de passione, sed prius ostendat linguæ suæ veritatem. Tu ostendis pœnam; ego quero causam. Tu dicis, sum passus: ego dico, quare sis passus. Nam si attendamus solas passiones coronantur et latrones."‡ "Let no one therefore boast of his suffering, but let him point to the truth. You refer to your suffering, I ask the cause. You say I have suffered, but I ask why did you suffer? For if there be only questionof suffering then even robbers should be rewarded." In effect God has never attested by miracles to the sanctity of those who suffered and died outside the Catholic Church in behalf of their respective sects. The cause in their case was wanting, the principle was absent, the constituting element of martyrdom was not at hand. "Si vultis martyres veros imitari, causam vobis elegite.§ "If you desire to imitate the genuine martyrs attend first to the cause."

The fortitude of the martyrs springs in part from the fear of the judgments of God and in part from his promises. The principle of martyrdom, indeed its root is

* Augustine, vol. ix., p. 170.
† Ibid. vol, ii. p. 256.
‡ Augustine vol. ii. p. 1453.
§ Ibid., vol. v., p. 1297.

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charity, for without this divine virtue there can be no martyrdom. The fear however of the judgment of the Lord served not a little to form the martyrs' character and to prepare them for the sacrifice. They knew and carried into practice the meaning of the Redeemer's words "Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus. . . sed potius timete eum qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam."*

A few days of suffering, oftentimes only a few hours in the face of the torments there fore-shadowed appeared to them merely as trifling and of no moment. Christ's example, too, the prince of martyrs loaded with the heavy burthen of the cross and staggering on the way to Calvary consoled and encouraged them in the hour of trial, for Christ not only taught but practised the doctrine of martyrdom. "Iter ostendit et viam fecit."†

But whence is this word martyr? What does it necessarily imply? It signifies a witness—one who bears testimony to the true doctrine of Christ and who dies in its defence. The words of the son of God when sending forth his apostles to establish his kingdom all over the earth foreshadowed and predicted this testimony. "But he said to them: it is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father hath put in his own power. But you shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the uttermost parts of the earth." ‡

And so it happened. Peter witnessed to Christ in Rome, when inverted on the cross he sealed his faith with his blood. John witnessed to him in Patmos, Thomas in the Indies, and the others in the various fields of their respective labors.

The mistake that the enemies of religion have ever made

* Matt., chap. 10, p. 28. † Aug: vol. 5, p. 1248. ‡ Acts., chap. 1, v. 7-8.

in attempting to destroy the faith of Christ in the blood of the faithful is that they judged of the Church as of a human society. They did not contemplate that the more they slew the more powerful she became. The aphorism "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Christians" had no meaning in their eyes and yet it was true the more that were slain the more numerous became the believers. The life-blood of the victims poured out with such freedom and generosity enriched and fertilized the land, it animated and encouraged the indifferent, enlightened and persuaded the unbelieving while for every one slain upon earth an additional intercessor was obtained before God for his Church upon earth. Go on then implacable tyrants, draw the sword as frequently and as fiercely as you please, slay by hundreds, yea by thousands, if you will, the faithful children of God but bear in mind that the more you slaughter on earth the more numerous will be the advocates of the Church before God in heaven. Every faithful Christian that gives his life for the cause of Christ in this life will be an intercessor in the next for the advancement of the same divine cause here below. Millions of martyrs around the throne of God are a power, an army that no tyrant can afford to despise. It is an error to suppose that the martyr when slain is conquered. Christ dead on Calvary was not Christ conquered. The victory was only apparent, it was not real. It is the same in the case of him who dies for justice sake. His death is not a triumph for his enemies, it is a defeat, for, as Augustin says, the christian conquers by dying.

Has not time proved the truth of this? What tyrant has extinguished the faith of Christ I will not say in the whole world at large but within the narrow limits of his own personal rule? Did Nero, did Domitian, did Trajan? History answers in the negative. The same is

true of subsequent ages. The Byzantine emperors found it impossible to bend the church to their individual notions, so did others of more modern times and so do those of the present day who have raised their hands against this divine creation of God. Why then will men unmindful of the lessons of the past attempt to do what the history of near two thousand years proclaims to be impossible? Why will they still labor in vain to overturn a church thus visibly defended by the power of the Most High? Is this the only delusion that men will never abandon? If the enemies of religion won't acknowledge the divine character of the church, if they won't be persuaded that it is the creation of God, defended and supported by his almighty power, at least they should learn in the fact of the church's continuous triumph a lesson of wisdom against indulging the hope of being able to accomplish what the combined powers and devices of sixty generations have been unable to do.

There is a second species of martyrdom which though it does not conduct to the shedding of blood, yet enables us to claim a relationship with those who have died for the faith. This consists in the fulfillment of the law and the mortification of our irregular passions and sinful desires. Those who live well, says St. Basil, have an affinity with the martyrs: "Martyrum honores omnibus quidem in Dominum sperantibus summo studio esse debent; sed præcipue vobis vertutis colentibus qui vestra erga claros et celebres conservos voluntatis propensione amorem in communem Dominum ostendis; et maxime quod aliquid habeat accurata vivendi ratio cum iis qui per animi fortitudinem consummati sunt."* And Augustin in like manner says: "Et martyr hinc exies si omnes tentationes diaboli superaveris."† "Thus you shall become a martyr if you overcome all the temptations of the Devil." And again in another place "Martyr

* Basil, vol. 3., p. 563. † Aug. vol., 5, p. 50.

eum latine testis dicitur. Igitur quotiescumque bonis affectibus mandatum Christi facimus toties Christo testimonium perhibemus"* "A martyr is called a witness. Wherefore, as often as we fulfil the law of Christ by virtuous desires we bear testimony to Christ." As if he had said, all who, by the fulfillment of the law, testify to the doctrine of Christ are entitled to be ranked in the category of martyrs. How consoling and encouraging is not the knowledge of this for all true-living Christians. And as the life of man upon earth is a warfare and that we are constantly called upon by the purity of our lives to testify to the sanctity of our holy profession, occasions are never wanting of assimulating ourselves to those great champions of truth and of walking, though at a distance, in their footprints. Nor must it be supposed that the perusal of the sufferings of the martyrs—the consideration of the noble and heroic generosity with which they embraced all manner of opprobrium and torture rather than betray the principle of divine justice, electing rather to forfeit their lives than the faith they professed—can have aught save the most beneficial effect on our lives. It must of a necessity awaken our ardor for virtue, purify our affections and chasten our desires. It must teach us, as seen in the appreciation taken by others of this life and the next, the highest and most profitable lesson of Christian philosophy—the worthlesness of the things of earth compared with those of heaven. It must, in fine, deeply engrave on our minds what the apostle would have us constantly remember, that whatever we have unless it bringeth us to God is a loss and not a gain. "But the things that were gain to me, the same I have counted loss for Christ. Farthermore I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord for whom I have

* Aug: vol. 5., p. 2129.

suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ."* The martyrs above all others have practically interpreted the words of the Redeemer: "For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul or what exchange shall a man give for his soul."† To carry into effect the meaning of this passage they were ready to part with friends, with home, and even with life itself. The world indeed esteemed their act as folly, it condemned it as madness; but the judgment of the world is not the judgment of God, it is short sighted and contracted. It takes not into account that the present is only the prelude to a greater existence, that the glory of the life to come as far surpasses the splendor of the present, as heaven is elevated above the earth. The thought of this it was that made the Apostle give expression to the words, "But he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."‡ And again: "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world."§ As if he had said, God forbid that I should rejoice in any thing save what conducts through tribulation to the kingdom of God.

After the divine scriptures, then, as an eminent writer well remarks, nothing should be dearer to us than the acts of the martyrs. We cannot consider them without being deeply impressed and greatly encouraged by what they contain. We cannot review them and rise from their perusal, without feeling the ardor and enthusiasm of those generous souls communicated to our being. For heroism, generosity, self-sacrifice and magnanimity of purpose, which are virtues that insensibly win our approval and take hold of our nature, are indelibly imprinted on every

* Philip. chap. 3, v. 87–8.
† Math. chap. 16, v. 26.
‡ 2. Cor., chap. 10, v. 17.
§ Gal., chap. 6, v. 14.

page. What mind, for example, can contemplate without emotion, the calm, majestic tranquillity of Polycarp, the noble, defiant enthusiasm of Ignatius, or the generous enthusiastic self-sacrifice of Sebastian. Cold, indeed, must be the mind that can rise from the contemplation of the torments endured by these admirable champions of truth without being deeply affected thereby.

This is a sufficiently satisfactory reason why the Church has ever sedulously gathered and carefully guarded as her most precious of treasures, these records of the sufferings of her devoted children. Nor indeed was this always easy of attainment: it was even at times most difficult to be done. The time of persecution is not the time of historic narrative. When the sword is drawn the pen is dropped. In times of violence men think more of saving life than of writing obituaries. And when the storm has passed and tranquillity ensued, it is not always a matter of easy accomplishment to discover amid the wreck and ruin that has been caused, the records of the departed. Hence the impossibility of discovering even a tithe of the names of the heroes who fell in the service of religion defending by their blood its dearest principles. Of the great loss thus sustained by religion the fathers have not failed to express their regret. "Hunc conquesti sunt aliquando sancti patres," says the author of the Acta Martyrum, "quod ex tanta sanctorum martyrum multitudine paucorum acta superessent quae in ecclesia publice legerentur."

The manner in which the acts that have come down to us, have been obtained was mainly twofold. They were purchased from the notaries public, who assisted at the trials, and who had carefully inscribed all that had happened; others were obtained, by the faithful intermingling, disguised, amongst the unbelievers, and afterwards reporting

to the proper authorities all they had heard and seen. A third source was from the records furnished by the martyrs, themselves, as in the case of Ignatius, Flavian and others. But several of these, obtained as I have stated, perished through time and the malice of tyrants. Independent also of the numbers thus consigned to oblivion, millions died for the faith of whom there were no acts or records at all. Their names, their heroism and self-sacrifice were buried with them in the same common grave. No faithful chronicler, no impartial historian, no painstaking compiler has handed down to us an ample and graphic description of all they endured for the cause of Christ. The archives of heaven alone contain such an account. Who for example—what contemporary christian writer, what faithful witness of the fury and rage of the unbelievers, has portrayed for us, in a manner worthy of the sublimity and grandeur of the subject, the noble and heroic resistance of the Christians under Nero. Have not the horrors of that first night, when an infuriated Roman populace rose up in its might and sought to avenge by every manner of insult and torture on the innocent Christians the imaginary crime of the burning of the capital, been left wholly unchronicled. Is it not at best confined to a couple of passages in the writings of a pagan contemporary author? It would be impossible under such circumstances to write as ample and graphic an account of the sufferings of the martyrs of the Church of God, as could be desired. As well might one attempt to enter into the details of the history of a country many of whose primitive annals no longer exist.

The thousandth part of the heroism displayed by the martyrs, in their contest with their unscrupulous tormentors, shall never be known. It exceeds by far the bravery of the most dauntless troops that ever struggled for liberty or

* Ruinart, Acta Martyrum, Praefatio Generalis, p. iv.

honor. Not the Grecian heroes in their contest against Troy, exhibited such indomitable courage. "Incomparibilior enim pulchrior," says St. Jerome, "est veritas Christianorum quam Helena Grecorum. Pro ista enim fortius nostri martyres adversus hanc Sodomam, quam pro illa illi haeres adversus Trojam dimicaverunt."*

To die in the ranks of duty defending some interest or principle of worldly honor under the eye of an approving sovereign, and in presence of an admiring nation, is what requires no more than that ordinary heroism that men are generally suppossed to possess. But to expose one's self as an outcast and an object of approbrium in defence of a cause that hath only for its object the advancement of one's spiritual interest, evinces a courage, a constancy and bravery to be encountered only in the case of the martyr.

The circumstances under which the martyr is called upon to shed his blood for the cause he maintains are an evidence too of how immeasurably superior is his fortitude to that of the bravest of worldly troops. To extricate himself from his difficulty—from tortures oftentimes the most excruciating and a death the most painful and lingering, all that was needed was an abandonment of principle. The burning of a grain in incense, the utterance of a single word, a sign, a nod was sufficient to relieve him from suffering and to obtain for him the favor of his sovereign. But death a thousand times was preferable to him than a single act of dishonor. Can the same be affirmed with equal truth of the combatants of earthly rulers? How many instances are there not on record of armies, while the issue was still doubtful and victory had not yet inclined to either of the combatants, flying from the contest and shamefully abandoning the cause they supported. What body of indomitable warriors has ever entered on a campaign

* Jerome, vol., I., p. 756.

with the full consciousness of being necessitated to die in the struggle? The martyr, and the martyr alone, knows the destiny that is awaiting him. He is aware that he will have to die in behalf of the cause he has espoused; he knows that his life is a sacrifice that is demanded at his hands, and he is willing to make it. The army to which he belongs has never yielded in the shock of battle. For the last eighteen hundred years and upwards it has ever steadily advanced on the road to victory. The soil of every country and the streets of every capital have been sprinkled and sanctified by the blood of its generous members. Every where it has encountered the enemy and every where it has uniformly conquered. Associations of the most soul-stirring and glorious encounters and achievments cluster profusely around this grand old army of martyrs and are encountered upon every page of its history. The campaign in which it is engaged is as old as Christianity itself. It began with the establishment of the new dispensation and had for its chief the Redeemer himself. The contest was at first confined to the narrow limits of Judea: Judaism was the Church's first adversary. But as time went on and the fulfillment of the apostolic commission to preach the gospel to every creature was carried into effect, the circle of the Church's encounters was enlarged and continued to increase till the entire world with all the nations of the earth became, the former the battle ground, and the latter the opponents of the Church's indomitable army. Nor must it be supposed that the contest has ended yet: by no means. The struggle continues and will go on till the end of time for this is the ordained providence of the Most High, this is the inheritance bequeathed by Christ to his mystic spouse. The result however, will ever be the same, the Church shall triumph and this triumph shall be by the firmness, fortitude and suffering of her faithful children.

CHAPTER IV.

CAUSES OF THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH EVER THE SAME—THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH AVOIDING PERSECUTION BECAUSE OF HER MISSION TO TEACH THE TRUTH—PERSECUTION UNDER THE OLD LAW—HOW THE PROPHETS WERE PERSECUTED—PERSECUTION HAS VARIED ACCORDING TO THE TIMES—ITS ADVANTAGES—PROBABLE NUMBER OF THE MARTYRS.

The cause of the persecution of the Church has been the same in every age; it is the antagonism that exists between truth and error, or more properly the antipathy of the evil one to the practice of virtue. This is the secret of all the violence that has been offered to the spouse of Christ from the beginning. Were the Church's claims of a less absolute nature, could she accomodate herself to the passions and prejudices of the world and thereby alter her standard of teaching and morality, she would not have arrayed against her, as she has had, the power and hostility of the world. It is the truth of which she is at the same time the despositary and guardian, and the necessity incumbent upon her of preaching the same in all its integrity, that has earned for her so many and such powerful opponents. It has been the same from the beginning of the world. The practise of virtue in every instance, whether under the law of nature, the Mosaic law or the Christian dispensation, has uniformly awakened the hostility of the ungodly. The common enemy of mankind envying man's service of his creator has unfailingly stirred up against the virtuous of every age the bitter and unrelenting hostility of the wicked. Thus the first apologist of the Christian

religion, Justin Martyr, was enabled to taunt the enemies of religion in his day in the following language: "For the demon, as we have already shown, has always pursued with his hatred those who have lived according to reason and who have shunned vice whatever otherwise their philosophical opinions may have been." The case was not different in the Mosaic law. The bold enunciation of truth uniformly drew down upon its authors the chastisement of the wicked. Neither age, nor office, nor sanctity was able to shield men from the violence aroused by the utterance of truth. The prophets of the Lord were constantly subject to the greatest persecutions at the hands of the impious. They were beaten, imprisoned, and slain in numbers. "For when Jezabel killed the prophets of the Lord he took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifty and fifty in caves and fed them with bread and water."* They were even slaughtered daily during a part of the reign of the wicked Manasses. "For, by setting out from a contempt of God he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets for *he every day slew some of them* till Jerusalem was overflown with blood."† It was this perverseness and unwillingness to listen to the representatives of divine truth that made the Divine Spirit reproach the same race in the following language. "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them who foretold of the coming of the Just One, of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers."‡

To specify instances. It was the fearless, unqualified condemnation of the errors of Juda that earned for Zacha-

* iii Kings, chap. 18, v. 4.
† Josephus, Antiquities, book 10, chap. 3.
‡ Acts. chap. 7, v. 51–52.

rias an ignominious death. "And they (the people of Juda) forsook the temple of the Lord, the God of their fathers and served groves and idols; and wrath came upon Juda and Jerusalem for this sin. And he sent prophets to them to bring them back to the Lord. . . . . The spirit of God then came upon Zacharias, the son of Joiada the priest, and he stood in the sight of the people and said to them. Thus saith the Lord God: Why transgress ye the commandment of the Lord which will not be for your good and have forsaken the Lord to make him forsake you. And they gathered themselves together against him and stoned him at the king's commandment in the court of the house of the Lord." *

A similar frankness of speech was near drawing down on the prophet Hanani a like chastisement. For, having advised his royal master of the impiety of making a covenant with the Assyrians he earned for himself a prison. "At that time Hanani the prophet came to Asa, king of Juda, and said to him: Because thou hast had confidence in the king of Syria and not in the Lord thy God, therefore hath the army of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand. . . And Asa was angry with the seer and commanded him to be put in prison because he was greatly enraged, because of this thing: and he put to death many of the people at that time." †

Micheas was persecuted in like manner and how ill it fared with him we may learn from this. "Put this fellow in prison (saith the king) and give him bread and water in small quantity, till I return in peace." ‡ The case of Jeremiah was nothing better but if possible worse. "And they beat him and cast him into the prison that was in the house of Jonathan." § Ammos, another of God's prophets was

* II Paralipomenon, chap. xxiv, v. 18–21.
† Ibid. chap. xvi, v. 7-10.
‡ II Paralipomenon, chap. xviii, v. 26.
§ Ibid.

accused of rebellion for having uttered divine truth, while Elias was saved from the wrath of Jezebel by being taken up to heaven. More striking still, as evidencing how the representative of divine truth is sure to draw down upon himself the anger and hatred of the world, is the case of our blessed Redeemer who, for having asserted his divinity, was declared worthy of death. "Then the high priest rent his garment, saying: He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses?" * "They therefore being gathered together Pilate said: Whom will you that I release to you, Barabbas or Jesus that is called Christ. For he knew that for envy they had delivered him." †

It has not been the utterance of divine truth, alone, that has aroused the hostility of the ungodly in every age; adherence to it, as well, has also awakened hostility. The martyrdom of Eleazar is an apposite instance of this for, having refused to do what was forbidden by the law and choosing rather an honorable death than a sinful existence, he brought upon himself the anger and violence of the malevolent. "But let this suffice in a few words for a warning to the readers. . . . Eleazar one of the chief of the scribes, a man advanced in years and of a comely countenance was pressed to open his mouth to eat swine's flesh. But he choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life went forward voluntarily to the torment." ‡ The case of the Machabees and of Daniel and his holy companions are also appropriate instances. In short the whole history of the people of God, whether under the old or new dispensation, furnishes us with evidences the most satisfactory of the preaching and profession of divine truth having been attended by opposition, violence and persecution. And that this spirit of hatred and opposition shall continue to

* Math. chap. xxvi, v. 65. † Math. chap. xxvii, v. 17–18.
‡ II Machabees, chap. vi, v. 17–19.

the end is indicated in the words of the author of our faith who was careful to assure us that no opposition however great would ever prevail * against his holy religion. "And when they shall persecute you in this city flee into another. Amen, I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel till the Son of man come." †

The persecution to which the Church has been subjected has varied with the character and temper of the times. At first violent, consisting of proscription, torment and death, it subsequently became fraudulent as in the case of the false brethren, while in the third instance it has combined the characteristics of both, being violent and fraudulent. This is the persecution waged at the present day by some of the great powers of the world, and it is to be the characteristic of the one which will precede the immediate coming of the Son of God at the end of time.

Of the signal advantages of persecution to the Church in her corporate and individual capacity there cannot be a doubt. The life of man is a warfare on earth,‡ and the apostle assures us that whoever would live piously and godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.§ Persecution then is not a hindrance but a help—an aid to the attainment of life everlasting. "Not only," says St. Augustine, "is it not pernicious but even useful to the Church in order that the number of the martyrs may be completed." And St. Jerome says that he who does not suffer persecution is not a Christian. Much more encouraging and sustaining however are the words of the Savior himself who with his own divine lips pronounced blessed all who are deemed worthy of suffering in so noble and profitable a cause. "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall

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* Math. chap. xvi, v. 10.
† Math. chap. x, v. 23.
‡ Job, chap. vii, v. 1.
§ Timothy, chap. iii, v. 12.

revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake. Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets before you."*

Persecution accordingly, when undergone for religion and justice sake, is not an unmixed evil. It is the occasion of much merit and glory to the faithful. To this the numerous martyrs now in heaven can bear a ready and willing testimony, for to the sufferings they endured in the flesh they owe under God their salvation. Others too, though not of the same class, are alike indebted for their happiness in the kingdom of heaven to the sufferings they endured during life, their affections being thus purified from all inordinate desires, their hearts detached from temporal things, and their souls fixed on the attainment of life everlasting. Thus by an admirable disposition of divine providence what is intended by our enemies for our destruction becomes the occasion of our glory, and the cause of our happiness. If sufferings have to be endured, and are appointed for us by God, it is because, as a tender-hearted parent, he designs to withdraw us from self, to detach us from the world, and so to save us from hell.

In the absence of statistical records, and with nothing to guide us but the general data furnished by antiquity, it would be impossible to fix with anything like accuracy the number of the primitive martyrs. To attempt it would be to expose one's-self to the danger of grievous misstatements, and to trifle with a subject the nature of which calls for the most scrupulous exactitude. But though the numbers of the martyrs cannot be determined, even approximately, it is beyond doubt they were exceedingly great. For this we have the testimony of the most ancient and reliable authorities. The ante and post Nicene Fathers

*Math. chap. 5, v. 10-12.

wholly agree herein. Ireneus, writing as early as the middle of the second century, was enabled to say that multitudes of martyrs had in every place and at all times, from the foundation of the Church, given testimony to the faith. "Ecclesia omni in loco ab eam quam habet erga Deum dilectionem, multitudinem martyrum in omni tempore præmittit ad Patrem."* Origen, who wrote a little later, speaking of his own time, says: "Nostro tempore multi scientes moriendum sibi, si confiteantur Christianismum abnegato vero absolvendos se, contempserunt vitam et ultro mortem ob pietatem elegerunt."† Eusebius and Lactantius are stronger still. The former designates the numbers that suffered under Trajan as multitudes, and those under Antoninus as innumerable; while Lactantius, whose moderation in speaking of the earlier persecutions gives his authority particular value, says in reference to the last persecution, that if he had a hundred mouths and a hundred tongues, he could not disclose one half the dreadful scenes enacted in that persecution alone. "Non mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum, ferrea vox, omnes scelerum comprehendere formas, omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possim." The post Nicene Fathers' and Church historians' testimony in regard to the same, is equally strong. They all speak of the number of the martyrs as immense, innumerable, incalculable. St. John Chrysostom discoursing on Peter's weakness in denying his Lord and his subsequent courage in testifying ing to the faith, says: "Ante crucem princeps apostolorum ne ostiariæ quidem minas tulit, sed post tantam initiationem aiebat se nescire quis esset; post crucem vero orbem terrarum peragravit; hinc *innumeri populi martyrum jugulati sunt* praeoptantes occidi quam ea loqui quae locutus fuerat princeps apostolorum unius ostiariæ terrore superatus."‡ Au-

* Apud Ruinart, chap. xxiv. † Lib. 3, Contra celsum.

‡ St. Chrysostom, vol. 1, p. 825.

gustine whose authority as a grave and unimpassioned writer cannot be doubted, says that the world is filled with martyrs: "Prædictæ sunt persecutiones; factæsunt a regibus colentibus idola. Pro ipsius idolis adversus nomen Christi *repleta est terra martyribus.*" * And in another place he says that if those who suffered on any one day were enumerated, they would amount to thousands. "Unus dies passionis martyrum si computetur millia hominum inveniuntur coronatorum," †

The ecclesiastical historians are equally strong in their assertions on this point. Nicephorus, patriarch of Constantinople who wrote in the 8th century, speaking of Decius' persecution, says it would be easier to count the sands on the sea shore than the number of martyrs who died in that single persecution. In fine, Cornelius a Lapide, commenting on the eleventh chapter of St. Paul to the Hebrews, speaks of those who died for the faith under Trajan as immense; "immensas quotidie martyrum jugulans catervas." ‡

It may be safely averred, then, that it is the common belief and teaching of the Church, as expressed by her most ancient and respectable writers, and embodied in the traditions of all times, that vast numbers of the faithful became martyrs. That these immense multitudes, aggregated hundreds of thousands and millions is also the teaching of the most respectable writers, and the common beleif of the faithful. After saying that the number of the martyrs cannot be estimated even approximately, the learned author of the Dictionaire Encyclopedique, Goshler, says that it is certain and acknowledged, that even from the first ages, the number of the martyrs amounted to millions. "Ce qui est certain et avéré, c'est que le nombre en est immense et montait, des les premièrs siècles à des

* Chrysostom, vol. 5, p. 151. † Ibid. p. 1176

‡ Commentarium in Hebreos, p. 488.

millions." * On the authority of the same we learn, that Bosio estimated the number of the martyrs during the first three centuries at five millions. The weight of this preëminently learned archeologist's opinion is of double value inasmuch as it was the result of more than a generation of investigation in those subterraneous caverns, the Catacombs at Rome, where the bodies of the martyrs were deposited. Nor was his opinion on this subject hastily put before the world, for it was not till thirty years after his death, that his great work was for the first time, published under the auspices of the Vatican librarian, Cardinal Barberini. Again Genebrard, one of the preceptors of St. Francis de Sales, and admittedly one of the most learned men of his time, computed the number of the martyrs at a much higher figure, setting them down even at ten millions! It would be interesting to place before the reader the grounds on which these eminent men based their respective calculations. But as we are not in a position to consult their writings, all that we are enabled to do is to give the fact of the numbers they state on the authority of the writer just mentioned. To some the numbers given by Bosio, and especially those assigned by Genebrard, might appear entirely extravagant. Upon a careful and impartial examination, however, it will, we think, be admitted that these figures are reasonable. Of course in dealing with this matter, all that we can do is to furnish a general argument; yet such an argument, we feel confident, as will bring conviction to the mind of all reasonable persons. To appreciate at its proper value an argument of this nature, several things have to be taken into account, and it is only by keeping these matters and their various attendant circumstances constantly before the mind, that we can arrive at a reasonable conclusion.

* Goshler, vol. 14, p. 364.

In the first place it is, as we have said, the common teaching and tradition of the Church, supported by the testimony of the most eminent and learned writers, that vast numbers died for the faith in the primitive ages. These vast numbers, we have also shown, have been interpreted as signifying not merely hundreds of thousands, but millions. The sacred writers' predictions in regard hereto, as interpreted by respectable commentators, support the same. Thus commenting on that passage of the Apocalypse wherein St. John says, "I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the martyrs," Dr. Walmesley says: "This inhuman woman, this impious Jezebel, this cruel persecutrix, has drenched herself with so much Christian blood, which she has spilt, that she appears to be drunk with it. Who is this but idolatrous persecuting Rome? Innumerable were the martyrs she put to death throughout the vast extent of her dominions, and even in her own bosom, the city itself. Innumerable likewise were the other saints or holy confessors, who though not slain, were by her condemned to lose some of their limbs, and had an eye bored out, their tongues plucked away or the sinews of a leg or a thigh cut, etc., or, in fine, were put to torture that tore away their flesh and drained their blood. We have seen the account of ten dreadful persecutions which swept away an infinite multitude of Christians; and all these persecutions were the work of the Roman emperors and their substitutes in the provinces. It is then apparent who the woman is that was seen drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." *

Again, St. Ambrose interpreting the 18th verse of the 9th chapter, "And by these three plagues, was slain the third part of men," tells us that this signifies the multitude of the martyrs: "Ab his tribus plagis interfecta est *tertia*

* Pastorini, p. 102.

pars hominum; id est multitudo martyrum."—Vol. 2, p. 862. To bring conviction to the mind of the reader, then, regarding the fact that the number of martyrs who died for the faith in the primitive times, amounted to millions, we invite him to consider as the basis of our argument, the last, and admittedly by all, the greatest of the Roman persecutions, namely, Diocletian's. By weighing attentively the nature, extent, and results of this persecution, we will be in a position to form an intelligent and practical judgment on the question now before us.

At the time that persecution broke out the Christians constituted in all probability one fourth of the entire population of the whole Roman Empire. This we can readily suppose as well from the well known and universally acknowledged rapid increase of Christianity as from the casual assertions and positive declarations of primative writers. Thus as far back as a century previous Tertullian spoke of the Christians as follows: "Hesterni sumus et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes insulas etc." We are of yesterday and yet we fill your entire empire, your cities, your islands, your fortresses, your towns, your assemblies, your camps, your palaces, your senate, your forum; in a word we leave you only your temples. Your army as is known is immense and yet the Christians of one province can outnumber it: "possumus dinumerare exercitus vestros: unius provinciæ plures erunt." And continuing the writer says that if the Christians wished to avenge tehmselves on their enemies they could do so without resorting to arms, and merely by withdrawing into some remote region, for that in that case their absence would leave the empire a desert. "Potuimus et inermes nec rebelles, sed tantummodo discordes, solius divortii invidia adversus vos dimicasse."*

*Apologetica adv. gentes, chap. xxxvii.

Admitting the foregoing to be partly rhetorical and partly a general mode of expression we are still enabled to gather from it the writer's conviction regarding a vast body of Christians then in the empire. Much more decisive, however, and to our purpose is the statement of the same writer when in an other part of his works he affirms that the faithful were then almost in the majority in every city subject to the Roman authority. "Cum tanta hominum multitudo, pars pene major civitatis cujusque in silentio et modestia agimus singuli forte noti majis quam omnes."* And in the fifth chapter of the same he also says: "Quid facies de tantis millibus hominum tot viris ac feminis, omnis sexus, omnis ætatis, omnis dignitatis offerentibus se tibi."† From these and other like sentences that might be adduced it is plain that the Christians in the time of Tertullian amounted to several millions and constituted a very considerable proportion of the entire population of the empire otherwise the apologist's language would be meaningless and erroneous. The same is to be inferred from the letter of the governor of Bithynia who in his comunication to his imperial master declared that the temples of the gods were wholly abandoned.‡ Again the rapid increase of Christianity from the very beginning warrants us in arriving at the same conclusion. Thus five and twenty years had not elapsed since Peter arrived in Rome and the Christians had become meantime so exceedingly numerous that those who perished on one occasion before the end of the first century were declared to be a vast multitude. But what testifies beyond all contradiction to the presence of an immense Christian population in and around Rome prior to the last general persecution, and there is no reason for supposing that the faith was not almost as extensively propa-

* Liber ad Scapulam, chap. ii. † Ibid, chap. v.

‡ See Pliny's letter.

gated in other parts of the empire, is the presence of those subterranean caverns commonly called Catacombs formed it is now freely admitted by the Christians themselves and where from seven to ten millions of bodies were deposited.

The argument, then, that presents itself to the mind of the reader is this: if in the days of Tertullian or at the beginning of the year A. D. 200 the Christians constituted such a considerable proportion of the entire population, how much more must not their numbers have increased by the time of the last general persecution in 302, especially as for years prior to that last effort on the part of the evil one, not only all restraint against the population becoming Christian was withdrawn but even honors and dignities were conferred on the faithful, many amongst them being charged with some of the highest and most responsible positions under government. Thus Eusebius describing the condition of affairs immediately before the last persecution, says: "To give a satisfactory account of the extent and the nature of that glory and liberty with which the doctrine of piety towards the supreme God, as announced to the world through Christ, was honored among all, both Greeks and barbarians, before the persecution in our day, this, we say, were an undertaking beyond our power. As a proof we might refer to the clemency of the emperors toward our brethren *to whom they even intrusted the government of provinces*, exonerating them from all anxiety as it regarded sacrificing on account of that singular good will that they entertained toward the doctrine. Why should we speak of those in the imperial palaces, and the sovereigns themselves, who granted their domestics the liberty of declaring themselves freely in word and deed on religion, and I would say almost the liberty of boasting of their freedom in the practise of the faith. These indeed they eminently valued and considered them

as more acceptable than their associates in the imperial service. Such was that Dorotheus, the most devoted and most faithful of all to them and, on this account, exceedingly honored beyond all those that had the charge of government and the most honorable stations in the provinces. We may also add Gorgonius equally celebrated with him; and so many others that were honored with the same distinction as those on account of the divine word. The same privileges one could observe conferred *on the rulers in every Church* who were courted and honored with the greatest subserviency by all the rulers and governors. Who could describe those vast collections of men that flocked to the religion of Christ and those multitudes crowding in from every city, and the illustrious concourse in the houses of worship? On whose account not content with the ancient buildings they erected spacious churches from the foundations in all the cities. These advancing in the lapse of time, and daily increasing in magnitude and improvement were not restrained by any odium or hostility."*

Taking this description of the state of Christianity, immediately prior to the last persecution, in connection with the assertions of Tertullian as given above, it must appear conclusively evident to every reasonable mind that the Christian community numbered at least one fourth of the entire population at the date of Diocletian's persecution. Every thing bearing on the subject leads to the same conclusion. Explaining the 17th verse of the 5th chapter of the Apocalypse, "And the dragon was angry with the woman, &c.," Bishop Walmsley says: "He (the devil) was further enraged to see his own power crushed, his reign of idolatry expiring, his agents the heathen Roman princes exterminated and now Christianity established through

* Eusebius, Translation by Cruse, p. 301.

the whole empire, that is, through the greater part of the then known world."

It is true this explanation has reference to the period immediately after the last persecution upon the triumph of Constantine, but yet it can be readily gathered herefrom what the state of Christianity was a little before. Plainer, however, are the words of the same writer when, under the heading of the tenth persecution under Diocletian, he says: "The Christian religion had by this time gained so much ground that in every province of the Roman empire and even in almost every town multitudes professed it and public churches had been built where they assembled for prayer and other holy exercises. Satan now raging with envy and seeing his empire was expiring seemed to summon up his whole strength in order to make a last effort for the support of idolatry and the destruction of Christianity." This expresses the common sentiment of all Church historians on that period. Idolatry was fast falling away, it had to a great extent disappeared from the empire; Christian Churches occupied the place of pagan temples and in a word truth had replaced error.

What, then, it may be enquired, was the population of the Roman empire at that date, for thus we will be enabled to determine the numbers of the faithful. According to Gibbon, the entire population in the time of Claudius amounted to 120,000,000. In forming this estimate, he allows only a single slave for every freedman, whereas Roberts allows twice as many slaves as there were freedmen, a circumstance which if admissible, would increase the population by several millions beyond the estimate assigned to it by Gibbon. Zumpt on the other hand, would limit the number of slaves to the number of freedmen, while Millman, Gibbon's annotator, steers a middle course, and strikes the line between Robertson and Zumpt. "I do not how-

ever differ so much from Zumpt and from Dureaux de la Malle as to adopt the higher and bolder estimate of Robertson and Blair, rather than the more cautious suggestion of Gibbon." * In fine, Champagny, the author of "Les Césars," gives Gibbon's estimate.† In this diversity of opinion, we would be doing no violence to the case to place the entire population in the days of Diocletian, at 150,000,000, but to avoid all grounds for contention, we will accept the lowest, or Gibbon's and Champagny's estimate, namely, 120,000,000. What proportion of these, it may now be proper to enquire, can be fairly regarded as Christian? From what we have already stated, keeping before the mind the assertion of Tertullian, and the other circumstances indicated above, it would not be extravagant, it appears to us, to affirm that at that particular date about a half of the entire population was Christian. To avoid however, laying ourselves open to the charge of making unwarrantable assumptions, we will merely assume, that one fourth, or 30,000,000 of the inhabitants of the empire were then Christian.

Again we know that while the Christians were more numerous then than at any previous period, the persecution, on the other hand, was by far the severest of any, inaugurated up to that date. It was the final and desperate effort of the evil one to save from utter destruction, his fast crumbling kingdom. "It cannot be doubted," says Gibbon, "that the Christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian than they had ever been before in any former persecution "‡

To these circumstances, in order to arrive at a fair conjectural estimate of the numbers of the faithful who died for the faith at this time, we must also add the well-known

* Gibbon, Hist. vol. i, p. 53. † See vol. iii., appendix, p. 320.
‡ Gibbon, vol. ii., p. 84.

character for cruelty of the pagan persecutors, their utter disregard for human life, and the powerful motives, such as avarice, debauchery, and self-interest, which their principal representatives their governors and subordinates in general, had for pursuing the Christians to death. So little was human life regarded in those days by those in power that for no manner of crime, but merely to minister to the depraved cravings of the rich, hundred and thousands were frequently slain in cold blood. Many a sad and sickening tale of such bloody amusements, could the annals of the hoary coliseum, furnish to the reader. In fact, butchery was the highest amusement of the people; they appreciated it more than anything else, and they did so because they were born in its atmosphere and taught to relish its horrors. Hence, the truth of the expression, "that men were butchered to make a Roman holiday." The Roman historians are our authority for the extreme to which a disregard for human life was carried by the Roman people. Thus Pliny recounts an instance of a contest, in which 600 wretched captives were made to do battle against 20 wild elephants, for the gratification of the Roman citizens. He also tells us of games given by Trajan, in which ten thousand men were matched against ten thousand beasts. But to what an extent must not that cruelty have gone, when it was even sanctified by religion, the vestal virgins being those, who by raising or depressing the fore finger, saved or sealed the doom of the dying gladiator.

Avarice and the thirst for plunder also led men to the perpetration of equally shocking atrocities. The empire was filled with unscrupulous characters, whose constant business it was to bring false accusations against their wealthier neighbors, in order to obtain possession of their wealth. And in this they were frequently aided and abetted by the highest officials, even by the Emperor him-

self. Speaking of the reign of Maxentius, Gibbon says: "The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expenses, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the art of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a *free gift* from the senators, was first invented; and the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an imperial consulship, were proportionally multiplied." And a little farther on he also says; "He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre the defenceless people; and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their Emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favorites the splendid villa or the beautiful wife of a senator."* The treatment of the conquered nations evinced a like barbarity and utter disregard for human life. This the reader may infer from a simple expression of Tacitus: "To kill and to rob, that was the age; the Romans made a solitude and called it peace."† Indiscriminate slaughter and ferocity marked the progress of the Roman arms, wherever the Roman standard was erected. "For four hundred miles," says Maxentius, in a letter to the Senate, "we have burned all the German villages, we have carried off all their cattle, and we have taken as captives, those who were unarmed, while we killed all who were found with arms." Still more inhuman and barbarous is the description by St. Salvian of, the destruction of Treves. "The first city of Gaul," says he, "was twice destroyed. The whole town had become one sepulchre. I myself have seen, lying in every place, the corpses of men and women, naked, unchastly offending the eye, and mangled by birds and dogs. The funereal smell of the dead, was a deadly pestilence for the

* Gibbon, vol. I., p. 473. † Agricola.

living; death was exhaled from death." In fine, upon the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, 90,000 of the inhabitants were either sold into slavery, or worried to death by beasts in the Roman amphitheatre.

CHAPTER V.

ARGUMENT FOR THE PROBABLE NUMBER OF THE MARTYRS CONTINUED—GIBBON'S REASONING REGARDING THE NUMBER OF THE MARTYRS ERRONEOUS—BOSIO'S ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF THE PRIMITIVE MARTYRS—GENEBRARDS ESTIMATE OF THE SAME—THE WRITER'S CONCLUSION—

From what has been stated in the foregoing chapter one can readily judge how it must have fared with the poor, unoffending Christians when all the power and weight of authority in the empire was directed towards their destruction. What leniency, what compassion, what favor were they likely to meet with from men whose whole existence and associations were colored and drenched with blood? How forcible, too, self interest, avarice and the desire of commending themselves to the favorable notice of Cæsar must have operated in the case of the prefects, consuls and lesser officers of the crown, to the detriment of the Christian faithful while at the same time the fear of being regarded as derelict in their duty must also have acted as a considerable stimulant in urging these agents of goverment to give effect to the instructions they received. To these may be added personal animosity, hatred, private revenge and that implacable detestation caused by conversion to the faith and the consequent abandonment of idolatory.

By keeping these considerations before the mind the reader will be enabled to form a fair conjectural opinion regarding the slaughter that must have ensued on the publication of the

edicts of Diocletian. The situation at the moment was somewhat if not actually this. Scattered through the entire empire enjoying a perfect repose, and wholly unapprehensive of any sudden outburst of danger were thirty or more millions of Christians intermingling with quadruple the number of pagan inhabitants, To this is to be added the emperor's firm determination of wholly abolishing the Christian religion. "The resentment or fears" says Gibbon, "of Diocletian at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared in a series of cruel edicts his intention of abolishing the Christian name." To understand the full force of the foregoing and especially that part of the historian's assertion regarding the emperor's resolve of abolishing the Christian religion, we must keep in view the power with which he was then vested both in his civil and military capacity, but especially in the latter. The Roman army at that time numbered considerably over a million men distributed throughout the empire so as to be able to execute with impunity at any moment their imperial master's command. Supporting these was a pagan population of quadruple the number of the Christians in every locality. What then we ask was there to prevent the Christians from falling victims to the fury of their enemies? Was it inability on the part of the pagans to destroy them? Was it lack of power? No; for we have seen that in numbers the former vastly exceeded the latter, while the army alone at the command of the emperor was more than sufficient for any purpose of that nature. Was it a hesitancy and unwillingness on the part of the emperor to push matters to extremes? By no means; for according to the testimony just quoted he had resolved to abolish and obliterate the very name of Christianity. Was the safety of the Christians, in fine, to be attributed to the humanity of the multitude and their horror

of shedding the blood of their fellow-men? To this we have already sufficiently responded when we instanced the inhuman characteristics of the times and the delight that society then took in shedding the blood of its members. Added to this is also to be taken into account the alarmingly excited condition of the country at large consequent on the alleged attempt on the life of the emperor, and the burning of his palace by the Christians. In fine, neither the will nor the power was wanting on the part of the authorities to effect the destruction of an alarmingly great number of the Christian community. The emperor's published proclamation avowing his unalterable determination of wholly abolishing the Christian religion is a sufficient evidence of the one, while the military power then under his command, backed up and supported by the entire pagan community, is an undeniable proof of the other. There was not wanting then the will nor the means. Taking all these considerations, then, into account what is there unreasonable in affirming that the sword of persecution reached the *one tenth* of the entire Christian population? Is not this a very moderate computation, and yet limiting the number of victims to this we would still arrive at the very considerable figure of 3,000,000 who died for the faith in this persecution alone; for, as we have shown, the Christian population of the time must have been in the region of thirty or more millions.

The inflexible determination of the emperor to unchristianize the empire, the appalling character of the torments inflicted, added to the time during which the persecution was protracted, all lead to the same conclusion, and testify to the millions that must have perished in this dreadful conflict between the Church on the one side and the powers of darkness on the other. To the first of these considerations we earnestly invite the reader's serious attention and for its proper appreciation refer him to that passage of

Eusebius in the life of Constantine where Diocletian is represented as consulting the Delphic Apollo, but from whom he could not obtain a reply. When pressed for an explanation regarding the silence of the oracle, the pagan high priest plainly declared his inability to return any answer in consequence of the powers exercised against him by the Christians. This so incensed the emperor that he instantly resolved to wholly exterminate the Christian community. "The emperor eagerly seized on this answer, and drew against the innocent a sword destined to punish the guilty; he instantly issued edicts written, if I may use the expression, *with a poignard*, and ordered the judges to employ all their skill to invent new modes of punishment." *

As regards the tortures employed, Eusebius, himself an eye-witness, furnishes a most sickening and harrowing account. After enumerating a variety of torments to which the Christians were subjected, such as being scourged with rods, torn with iron hooks, plunged into the sea, roasted on slow fires and cast to wild bulls, the author speaking of an individual locality the Thebais says: "But it would exceed all power of detail to give an idea of the sufferings and tortures which the martyrs of Thebais endured. These instead of hooks had their bodies scraped with shells and were mangled in this way until they died . . . . Others again perished bound to trees and branches; for drawing the stoutest of the branches together by machines for this purpose, and binding the limbs of the martyrs to each of these, they then let loose the boughs to resume their natural position designing thus to produce a violent action and tear asunder the limbs of those whom they thus treated. And all these things were doing not only for a few days or some time; but for a series of whole years. At one time ten or more, at another more than

* Eusebius, vit. Con., l. ii, chap. 54.

twenty, at another time not less than thirty and even sixty; and again at an other time, a hundred men with their wives and little children were slain in one day, whilst they were condemned to various and varied punishments. We ourselves have observed when on the spot many crowded together in one day, some suffering decapitation, some the torment of flames, so that the murderous weapon was completely blunted and having lost its edge broke to pieces, and the executioners themselves, wearied with slaughter, were obliged to relieve one another."*

Again the area over which this dreadful persecution extended and the time through which it lasted have also to be taken into account and will form a very important factor in forming a conjectural opinion regarding the numbers that died at that time for the faith. Although Diocletian divested himself of the purple shortly after he had issued his sanguinary edicts, appalled perhaps at the rivers of human blood that flowed on all sides; yet the persecution continued with intervals of respite during the entire subsequent decade. For the first three and a half years it was carried on in the east by Galerius, and in the west by Maximian. A short interval, and it was renewed in the west by Maxentius, and in the east by Daia, a man whom St. Jerome styled the most sanguinary tyrant that ever persecuted the Church of God. "His inhumanity and barbarity in torturing the martyrs surpassed," says Walmesley, "everything that had been practised before."†

Now we here re-affirm that a persecution of this particular character and nature taking into account the resolve on the part of the rulers, the means at their disposal, the area over which the conflict extended, that being the entire Roman empire, as well as the duration of the same,

* Eusebius, b. viii, chap, 9. † Pastorini Hist. of the Church, p. 65.

it is not an extreme or exaggerated assertion to maintain that one tenth of the entire Christian population fell victims to the rage and fury of the tyrants, a number which, as we have shown, would be equivalent to 3,000,000 of victims. If to these we add those who died for the faith during the previous nine persecutions, supposing their number to bear only a moderate proportion to those of the last, the figures given by Bosio, and even those assigned by Genebrard, will, we feel certain, appear to the reader by no means as unreasonable or extravagant.

To the foregoing it will not be sufficient to offer in rebuttal the calculation formed by Gibbon inasmuch as it is wholly gratuitous and plainly in conflict with the testimony of the author on whose evidence it is sought to be founded. The argument offered by the writer of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire is briefly this. According to the enumeration made by Eusebius, the entire number of martyrs that died for the faith in Palestine during the persecution of Diocletian was 92. But as Palestine was about the sixteenth part of the eastern portion of the empire the entire number that would accordingly have perished in the whole east, during the entire ten years of the persecution, allowing an equal number to have been martyred in the other parts of the eastern provinces, would be in the aggregate about fifteen hundred.

Continuing the same line of argument and applying it to the west, inasmuch as the persecution according to him lasted only for two or three years in that part of the empire, he complacently concludes that the entire number of martyrs during the whole persecution of Diocletian was not more than 2000! The reader will have a better comprehension of the author's argument by having before him the entire passage. "According to the distribution of the Roman provinces, Palestine may be considered as the six-

teenth part of the Eastern empire; and since there were some governors, who from a real or affected clemency, had preserved their hands unstained with the blood of the faithful, it is reasonable to believe that the country which had given birth to Christianity, produced at least the sixteenth part of the martyrs who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximian the whole might consequently amount to about fifteen hundred, a number which if it is equaly divided between the ten years of the persecution will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs. Allotting the same proportion to the provinces of Italy, Africa and perhaps Spain, where at the end of two or three years, the rigor of the penal laws was either suspended or abolished, the multitude of Christians in the Roman empire on whom a capital punishment was inflicted by a judicial sentence, will be reduced to somewhat less than two thousand persons."* The author it must be admitted has employed in the foregoing all his ability and tact to establish his case; he has employed as specious and deceptive an argument as could be conceived to undermine the tradition of ages on this memorable point, and thus has sought to deprive the Church of the Redeemer of one of the greatest glories of her history. How far he has succeeded, an analysis of his reasoning will presently show. The better to prepare the mind of his reader for accepting his argument he begins by characterizing the accounts furnished by ecclesiastical writers of the sufferings of the martyrs as vague and legendary. "The vague descriptions of exile and imprisonment, of pain and torture are so easily exaggerated or softened by the pencil of an artful orator that we are naturally inclined to enquire into a fact of a more distinct and stubborn kind: the number of persons who suffered death in consequence of

* Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 84.

the edicts published by Diocletian his associates and successors." Then with the address of an artful pleader he offered the argument above given. It would indeed be difficult to find a more insiduous and deceptive pleading. It is pre-eminently calculated to deceive, especially those who, relying on the veracity of the writer, would accept as true the numbers which according to him Eusebius furnished as having been martyred in Palestine during the entire persecution under Diocletian and his successors. Indeed the basis of the entire argument is this: we are assured by his (Eusebius') particular enumeration of the martyrs of Palestine that no more than 92 Christians were entitled to that honorable appellation.* What will here occur to the mind of the reader to enquire is—did Eusebius state that *only* 92 persons died for the faith in Palestine during the entire time of Diocletian's persecution? He did not. He gives indeed the names of ninety-two but as Millman, Gibbon's annotator, correctly remarks he does not limit the number to these. He is merely in this statement following his usual method of description for in no part of his history does he profess to give the names of all who died for the faith in any particular locality. On the contrary he plainly assures us that he mentions only the names of the more prominent. Thus of those who died at Nicomedia in the same persecution he says: "We shall give an account of the end of *one* leaving it to our readers to conjecture what must have been the character of the sufferings inflicted on the others."† And again in the same chapter he also says: "We shall only state of Dorotheus and Gorgonius with many others of the imperial freedmen that after various sufferings they were destroyed by the halter and bore away the prize of a heavenly victory." And again: "At this time, also, Anthony, then bishop of

* Gibbon., vol, ii. p. 82. † Book., viii. chap. vi.

the Church of Nicomedia, was beheaded for his confession of Christ and to him were added a multitude of believers that thronged around him." But does not Eusebius say at the end of his work that "these were the martyrdoms in Palestine in the space of eight years." We acknowledge he does; but it is one thing to say these were the martyrs, implying that these were the most remarkable and distinguished, and another to affirm that these were the only martyrs during the time stated. The author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire takes an unwarrantable liberty with the text in introducing into it the word *only* where it does not occur.

Granting however to Gibbon the truth of his assertion, in the matter of the martyrs of Palestine, his argument is still inadmissible, for in the very same chapter Eusebius speaks of an innumerable number of martyrs who died for the faith in the same persecution: "Many and various were the contests of the noble wrestlers in the cause of piety who presented *an innumerable multitude of martyrs* through the whole provinces."* The force of this Gibbon tries to set aside by attributing to the author bad faith and a desire to deceive. In making this assertion he fails to see that he is destroying his entire argument, for if Eusebuis be unreliable in one instance he must be in an another. There are equal reasons why he should desire to deceive in the case of the martyrs of Palestine, as well as in that of the provinces at large. And nothing was easier for him, for he had merely to add to the list he had given the simple expression "and others."

Allowing then that the expression employed by Eusebius, "and these were the martyrdoms etc.," implied an entire list of all who suffered for the faith and not merely the most prominent amongst them, yet the argument attempted

* Eusebius, b. viii., chap. 13.

to be founded on the passage is wholly erroneous inasmuch as the author assures us in the very subsequent passages that in the same persecution "innumerable martyrs" died for the faith in the eastern empire alone. As the author of the Acta Sincera Martyrum has well remarked, Eusebius is to be interpreted by Eusebius, and it will not do accept one part of his testimony and to reject another. There is no court of judicature in the world that would adopt such a course and pronounce a judgment in such a manner. If Eusebius be a faithful witness in the case of the martyrs of Palestine, let him be regarded as equally veracious when he speaks of those of the provinces in general. Either this or let him be rejected entirely: when in either case the argument urged by Gibbon is wholly without force.

Again an argument based upon analogy, in a case of this kind, is plainly deceptive and entirely inadmissible. Let us take as an example the endurance displayed by the Catholics of a particular locality of Great Britain during the days of the penal persecutions. If then from the numbers that in the face of the bitterest persecution and oppression adhered to the faith in particular parts of the empire, in Ireland for example, or in the chivalrous county of Lancashire in England, we attempted by analogy to construct an argument in favor of the great numbers that adhered to the religion all over the country at large, how erroneous would not our reasoning necessarily be? In fact, analogy to be an argument of any weight requires that the relations between the objects compared be identical. Hence the argument based on example differs from that of analogy in this, that the former is drawn from the similarity of the objects, and the latter from the similarity of their relations. Thus the argument employed in the case we are considering loses its force and becomes inadmissible when we remember that the relations of the

various parts of the empire were wholly dissimilar. And this holds even as far as the east was concerned, for it is plain that where the monarch resided the laws found their strictest application, and that consequently in Nicomedia especially, the blood of the Christians flowed in greater abundance than in the other localities. A variety of circumstances, too, must have operated favorably or otherwise in causing the magistrates to give greater or less application to the will of the emperor. These were personal animosity, avarice and a desire to recommend themselves to the favor of the ruler. Taking all these considerations then into account and viewing the matter dispassionately, we re-affirm that the numbers who died for the faith in the single persecution of Diocletian may reasonably be supposed to be three millions or more. When to these are added the numbers that died in the other preceding persecutions Bosio's and even Genebrard's estimates, as we have said, will not, we are sure, appear extravagant. But of this the reader will be able to form a more accurate judgment when we come to treat of the various persecutions in detail.

Before passing on, however, it is proper to advert here to the statements of another writer on this subject. Gibbon is not the only one who attempted to impugn the number of the martyrs. Long before him Dodwell broached the same theory; indeed it was from the latter that Gibbon took his idea; but the reasoning of both was equally unsound. From the fact that the Bucherian Calendar, the most ancient martyrological record extant, contains only a limited number of martyrs, not more than a half-dozen for every month of the year, he would have us conclude that none others existed prior to that date. This is founded on two erroneous assumptions—it supposes that the Bucherian Calendar was for the entire western Church and that the names of all who suffered for the faith were duly enrolled

therein. Both are equally untrue. Each individual Church had at that primitive period its respective martyrological record in which few or hardly any of those who suffered elsewhere were enrolled; while of those who testified to the faith in the localities where they dwelt the names of several were omitted from one cause or another. Even the Carthagenian Calendar though ampler than the Roman omits several names otherwise well known. There is no mention in this latter for instance of Rutilius who according to Tertullian in his book De Fuga was burned at the stake. Neither is there any mention in it of Lawrence, Ignatius, Celerina and other Carthagenian martyrs spoken of in the epistles of St. Cyprian.* The fact ,too, that the Bucherian Calendar was not edited before the latter half of the 4th. century or long after the end of the last general persecution is enough to invalidate Dodwell's position. It is sufficient to prove that it was not intended as a faithful record of all who suffered from the beginning. How after the lapse of so many years could the names of any but the more prominent be obtained from the local or general traditions? This is substantially what Prudentius asserts in his work *Περι Στεφανων* when he says that innumerable martyrs suffered at Rome whose names are unknown.

Dodwell employs an other equally erroneous argument when he attempts to impugn the number of the martyrs on the ground of their names not appearing in the homilies of the Fathers. To this it is only necessary to reply that this was not the object of the Fathers' discourses. They did not undertake to enumerate categorically those who suffered for the faith, while in their writings, numerous passages occur which, as we have seen, testify to their belief in the great number of the martyrs. In fine the martyrologies themselves are the most satisfactory

* Vide Acta Martyrum.

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evidence that they were not intended as a record for the names of each individual martyr, a matter which under the circumstances would be wholly impossible. Hence, in the Roman Calendar, under date June 24th, we find the insertion, "At Rome the innumerable number of martyrs accused of burning the city." In like manner in the other great outbursts of persecution, it was impossible to find more than the names of a percentage of those who suffered for the faith, and hence the common formulary in the martyrology, after mentioning the names of the more prominent, "Et alibi aliorium etc."

CHAPTER VI.

AGGREGATE SUM OF THE PERSECUTIONS UNDER THE ROMAN EMPERORS —MORE PEACE THAN PERSECUTION UNDER THESE MONARCHS—THE CATACOMBS—HOW THEY WERE FORMED—HOW THE CHRISTIANS WERE GENERALLY TREATED BY THE ROMAN EMPERORS—STATE OF THE CHURCH AT THE CLOSE OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

In assigning our reasons for the existence of millions of martyrs in the primitive ages, it was not our intention to convey to the mind of the reader the idea of continuous persecution and bloodshed down to the accession of Constantine. Such would be entirely inaccurate. In fact there was more peace than persecution under the Roman emperors. All indeed in some sense,* and particularly in the liberty they allowed their subordinates, may be said to have persecuted, but not in a manner that could be regarded as violent. According to Lactantius the sum of the Pagan persecutions down to the year 250 was exceedingly limited not exceeding in the aggregate more than sixteen years. This is readily adduced from his language. After speaking of Nero and Domitian as the only two of the Roman emperors who persecuted the Church in any formidable manner down to the reign of Decius, he says: "And in the times that followed (that is from the death of Domitian, A. D. 96, till the accession of Decius, A. D. 250.), while many well-deserving princes guided the helm of the Roman empire, the Church suffered no violent persecution from her enemies."† In

* Chrysostom, vol. I., p. 823.

† Lactantius: Liber de Morte Persecutorum, chap. iii., p. 199.

the concluding part of the sentence he continues to state how in consequence of that protracted peace the religion was propagated far and wide all over the world. "And she (the Church) extended her hands unto the east and the west insomuch that now there was not any the most remote corner of the earth to which the divine religion had not penetrated or any nation of manners so barbarous that did not, by being converted to the worship of God, become mild and gentle."

According to the foregoing, from Nero to Decius inclusive, there were only three really persecuting emperors in all, the sum of whose persecutions amounted in the aggregate, as we have affirmed, to no more than sixteen years at the utmost. This appears thus: Nero reigned fourteen years, that is, from 54 to 68; but the precise date at which he began to persecute is unknown. Lactantius merely says that when the emperor learned of the success of Peter and what vast numbers were abandoning idolatry he then drew the sword of persecution.* Granting, however, that the persecution began in the first year of his reign, it could not have been more than thirteen years in all, for the reason assigned.

Again though Domitian ruled fifteen years, that is from 81 to 96, it was not till the fifteenth or last year of his reign that he persecuted, so that under this emperor there was only one year of actual persecution. This is clear from the testimony of Eusebius who speaks as follows: "To such a degree indeed did the doctrine which we profess flourish, that even historians who are very far from befriending our religion have not hesitated to record this persecution and

*"Qua re (nempe conversio paganorum) ad Neronem delata, cum animadverterit non modo Romæ, sed ubiqne quotidie magnam multitudinem deficere a cultu idolorum et ad religionem novam, damnata vetustate, transire; ut erat execrabilis et nocens tyrannus prosilivit ad excidendum celeste templum, &c."

its martyrdoms in their histories. These also have accurately noted the time, for it happened according to them in the fifteenth year of Domitian." It is evident from this that the persecution under that monarch was only for about the space of a year, while that inaugurated by Decius was not of greater extent inasmuch as that emperor ruled only for the space of a single year. If we take Lactantius, then, as our authority, we will have to acknowledge that at most there were only sixteen years of serious persecution down to the year 250! In this we find a solution of the otherwise inexplicable difficulty regarding the Christian origin of the Catacombs. For supposing these works to be exclusively Christian as is now freely admitted,* the fact of their construction in opposition to the will of the civil authorities and in the face of continued oppression and persecution, could in no sense be reconciled with any reasonable theory. The explanation offered by Northcote,† to the effect that the Christians endeavored to conceal from the pagans the entrances to the Catacombs, though they only partially succeeded in this, according to the writer, is wholly insufficient to satisfy a critical mind. Equally unsatisfactory is the same author's suggestion that the Catacombs being in the vicinity of sand-pits, the excavated matter may have been brought to the surface as if pure pozzolana without exciting the suspicions of the pagans. Or again that the Catacombs being the private property of Christians concealment was comparatively easy. Not all nor any of these theories satisfactorily meet the difficulty; they are puerile and imaginative. It is surely demanding too much of the reader to ask him

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* Il n'y a pas longtemps encore, soutenir que les Catacombes avaient une origine exclusivement Chretienne etait pour le moins une opinion singuliere. Aujourd'hue les savans n'ont plus de doute a se sujet." Rome et ses Monuments par Le Chanoine de Blesser, p. 567.

† The Roman Catacombs, chap. i.

to believe that sixty large subterranean cemeteries with streets of from fifteen to twenty miles and more in length the united extent of which is probably from 900 to 1,000* miles in all could have been constructed by a poor, persecuted community without the knowledge and approval of the civil authorities. The fact is the Catacombs were not constructed under such circumstances at all.† They were not formed in the face of such difficulties as many, if not most, modern writers on the subject generally suppose and vainly attempt to explain. On the contrary they were made with the full knowledge, consent and approval of the pagan Roman emperors.‡ Down to the year 64 when the first great persecution broke out, the Christians buried their dead in this fashion, not from necessity but from choice, after the manner of the Jewish mode of burial. So that in the beginning at least it can not be denied that the Catacombs were formed by the Christians for their own personal use without opposition on the part of the authorities. Nor can it be shown that this right which the Christians, in common with Jews and gentiles enjoyed, of burying their dead as they pleased, was subsequently interfered with until the reign of Valerian in the latter half of the third century, when for the first time the Christians were prohibited entering the Catacombs.§ In fact nothing except the gods was more sacred at Rome in the eyes of the pagans than the tombs of the dead. They were under the protection of the law and so carefully guarded that they could not even be sold. The Christians accordingly in common with Jews and pagans availed themselves of the liberty accorded them by the law in regard to the manner of the burial of their dead. That is they buried them in the Catacombs formed for that purpose with the sanction and approval of the authorities. In like manner

* See Northcote, chap. i, p. 14.
† See Blesser.
‡ Ibid.
§ See Blesser, p. 554.

the Jews had two catacombs of their own, one in Trastavere and the other on the Appian Way.

The Catacombs were first the property of private individuals who suffered their brethren in the faith to share with them their use. Time, however, altered those relations so that what originally belonged to individul members of the Church, became eventually the common property of all the faithful, under the guardianship and protection of the Sovereign Pontiff. Thus at the beginning of the third century, Pope Zephyrinus entrusted the care of one of the three Catacombs on the Appian way, and probably the largest of those in the vicinity of Rome, to an individual named Calixtus, from whom it has taken its name.

Although Lactantius, as we have seen, has asserted that down to the year 250, there were only three persecutions of any formidable character, it is to be borne in mind, that the testimony of this writer is to be received with great caution and limitation. Indeed the very passages we have quoted from his writings, show the looseness and indefinitness of his assertions, for in saying that the Church, at that period, had extended her limits all over the earth, and had converted the entire world, he evidently was speaking in a figurative sense, and meant nothing more, if he intended conveying any definite ideas to the minds of his readers, than that the gospel was morally preached all over the earth, in the sense implied by the Apostle when quoting the words of the psalmist: "But I say, have they not heard? Yea, verily, their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world."* In like manner, the assertion regarding the absence of all violent persecution, except in the instances referred to, is to be received with very considerable caution; for as we shall see farther on, numbers of Christians died for the

* St. Paul, Rom., chap. iv, v. 18,

faith within the period in which Lactantius assures us there was no violent persecution at all. But whether their numbers and sufferings were such as to justify one in considering those periods, times of violent persecution, though they are thus commonly regarded by writers, the reader will be better able to determine, when in the sequel we treat of them consecutively.

Meantime it may be here interesting to enquire how under the non-persecuting emperors, the Christians were generally treated. Were they uniformly regarded with suspicion and distrust—were they excluded from all offices of position, power and emolument—were they crushed by exorbitant taxes and imposts? Were they disfranchised and deprived of all rights, civil, national and religious? Far from it. If the liberty and privileges enjoyed by them, prior to the last general persecution under Diocletian, be any test of how they were treated under the other Roman emperors, their general condition was anything but deplorable. For, according to the testimony of Eusebius, for years prior to 302, the Church enjoyed the amplest liberty; her children were not only not oppressed by their pagan masters, but they enjoyed the confidence of their sovereigns, even to the extent of being entrusted with the highest and most responsible positions in the community. Of this we have given already the most satisfactory proof, in the words of Eusebius. Unhappily however, the liberty they enjoyed and which should have been employed by them in advancing the interest of religion, became only the occasion of their ruin. "But when by reason of an excessive liberty," writes Eusebius, "we sank into negligence and sloth, one envying and reviling another in different ways, and we were almost as it were, on the point of taking up arms against each other, and were assailing each other with words as with

darts and spears, prelates inveighing against prelates, and people rising up against people; and hypocrisy and dissimulation had arisen to the greatest height of malignity. Then the divine judgment, which usually proceeds with a lenient hand, whilst the multitudes were yet crowding into the Church, with gentle and mild visitations, began to afflict its episcopacy, the persecution having begun with those brethren that were in the army. * * * * But some, that appeared to be our pastors, deserting the laws of piety, were inflamed against each other with mutual strife, and accumulating quarrels and threats, rivalship, hostility and hatred to each other, only anxious to assert the government as a kind of sovereignty for themselves."*

A truly deplorable description it must be acknowledged is the foregoing, of the state of religion at the close of the third century, prelates inveighing against prelates, people rising up against people, hypocrisy and dissimulation; pastors yielding themselves up to impiety and inflamed against each other with mutual strife, etc. Poorly indeed did such a condition of affairs fit them for encountering the terrible storm that speedily followed and hence, as we shall presently see the deplorable weakness of many in abandoning in the presence of torments their holy religion. It is not in the spirit of a cynic we make these admissions, for that would ill become our sacred profession. It is in the interests of truth and to convey to the mind of the reader an accurate idea of the subject on which we are writing. The object of all historical research should be the communication of truth and the dispelling of error. No good can accrue to the Church from concealing facts and misrepresenting events. Religion is not to be subserved by such means: the Church stands in need of no such an advocacy; she seeks no imaginary glory and she

* Eusebius, b. vii, chap. i.

desires no fictitious renown, and least of all what is founded on palpable untruth.

The sword of persecution, constantly drawn against the primitive Christians for three hundred years, is an engaging and favorite subject with fervid orators and enthusiastic declaimers. The thousands constantly suffering in the cause of divine truth, is what they love to picture to the fancies of their hearers. But is this in accordance with truth? Is there sufficient historic evidence to bear it out? Far from it. Millions indeed died for the faith, but, unhappily, numbers apostatized. The fact is there was great courage and much weakness exhibited in that time, while as regards the periods of suffering themselves the truth is there was, as we have seen, more peace than persecution under the Roman emperors. The great majority of those pagan rulers treated their Christian subjects with greater lenity, granted them more important immunities, and conferred upon them more solid and substantial favors, than many Christian monarchs of after ages did on theirs. For the truth of this, the reader will be furnished with ample proof in the proper place. Meantime, we solicit the attention of the reader to the examination of the extent to which the primitive Christians, as a body, expressed their readiness to suffer and die for the faith.

CHAPTER VII.

WEAKNESS OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS IN DENYING THE FAITH—ST. CYPRIAN'S TESTIMONY TO THIS EFFECT—INROADS MADE ON THE FAITH BY HERESY—MOTIVES THAT LED TO THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS—THE PREJUDICES AGAINST THEM IN THE MINDS OF THE PAGANS—TACITUS' IDEA OF THE CHRISTIANS—GREATER INJURY DONE TO THE CHURCH BY HER OWN UNNATURAL CHILDREN THAN BY PAGANISM—DISLOYALTY TO CÆSAR THE LEADING PLEA FOR PERSECUTING THE FAITHFUL IN EVERY AGE.

In keeping with the vague impression regarding the extent of the primitive persecutions, is the equally erroneous idea of the readiness of the faithful as a body to die for the faith. Much indeed were it to be wished that such were the case, for then the church would have been spared the humiliation of so many apostacies. History, however, teaches us exactly the contrary: nor is this to be a matter of surprise, for if apostacies have occured in subsequent ages, there is no particular reason why they should not have happened in the beginning. The extent to which these defections occurred, must ever remain a subject of conjecture, owing to the absence of impartial historians and the readiness of writers in drawing a veil over the weaknesses of the brethren. Neither Origen, Tertullian, Lactantius, nor Jerome, though entirely in their way, gives any account of the numbers that abandoned the faith in the presence of torments. Sufficient, however, is furnished in the casual admissions of others to warrant us in believing the number of apostates in the primitive times to have been very considerable. In a letter addressed by Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, in which the former is recounting the sufferings of the

Alexandrian Christians during the persecution of Decius, the following passage occurs: "All indeed are greatly alarmed and *many of the more eminent immediately gave way.* Some who were in the public offices were immediately led forth. Others were brought by their acquaintances, and when called by name they approached the impure and unholy sacrifices, but pale and trembling, as if they were not to sacrifice but themselves to be the victims and the sacrifices for the idols. They were jeered by the surrounding multitude and were obviously equally as afraid to die as to offer the sacrifice. But some advanced with greater readiness to the altars *and boldly asserted that they never had been Christians,* concerning whom the declaration of the Lord is most true, that they will scarcely be saved. Of the rest, some followed the good or bad example of those that preceded them. Some fled, but were retaken, and of these some held out as far as imprisonment and bonds; but, after a few days, abjured the faith before entering the tribunals. Some too, after enduring the torture for a time, at last apostatized. Others, however, remained firm and blessed pillars of the Lord, confirmed by himself, and, receiving strength and power suited to their faith, became admirable witnesses of his kingdom."*

Not very flattering, it must be acknowledged, is this account of the weakness of the Alexandrian Christians. But stronger and plainer still is the admission of the bishop of Cæsarea, who, contrary to his usual reticence, frankly acknowledges that numbers abandoned the faith in his country during the persecution of Diocletian. After stating that great numbers of the prelates of the Church endured, with a noble resolution, the greatest of torments, he immediately adds: "But *vast numbers* of others, broken and relaxed. . . . *voluntarily yielded at the outset.*"† Cyprian,

* Eusebius, book vi., chap. 41.

† Eusebius, book viii. chap. iii.

bishop of Carthage, draws an equally deplorable picture of the apostates of his day; he does not even give them the credit of holding out for a time, but, like those spoken of by Eusebius, represents them as abandoning their faith in great numbers at the mere sight of their torments. "At the first words of the tyrant, *a great number of the brethren abandoned their faith.* Nor were they overcome by the violence of the persecutions but they voluntarily yielded themselves."* From these very disagreeable admissions it is clear that the number of the apostates, in the eastern Church at least, was very considerable. It is not unreasonable to suppose that the same or nearly the same was the case in the west; but, no faithful historian having the heart to chronicle so unpleasant a matter, it must accordingly remain for ever a matter for conjecture.

The inroads of heresy on the ranks of the faithful, were equally disastrous. While Nero was torturing and slaying the Christians for the imaginary crime of burning his capital, Ebion, Saturninus and Basilides were teaching the most horrible doctrines and making numerous disciples.

The ostensible motives that led to the persecution of the Christians under the Roman emperors, were widely different from those that actuated Christian tyrants in after ages. They were of a two-fold character, political and religous, and, considering the relations of the believers to their pagan masters, much more logical and justifiable than those assigned by Christian rulers for a like oppression in after ages. To be a Christian was to be, in the eyes of the pagan Romans, a traitor to one's country and an enemy of the gods. The Roman empire, according to the popular traditional belief, was the work of the supreme powers, and to

* "Ad prima statim verba minantis inimici maximus fratrum numerus fidem suam prodidit, nec prostratus est persecutionis impetu, sed voluntario lapsu se ipse prostravit."—Opera Cypriani De Lapsis, p. 239.

them was it indebted for its development and preservation through centuries. Every victory gained over others and every calamity averted, was duly acknowledged by a procession to the capitol and a sacrifice to the gods. Polytheism, indeed, as a religion had lost its hold on the masses: it was derided by the learned and rejected by the ignorant. But, as the national faith, it had a charm and a sympathy for all. It assisted at the foundation of the empire, it grew with its growth and became interwoven with its most sacred and venerable traditions. It carried the mind back to the time when the race landed in the country, when, from a petty little state, the nation advanced to the proud and enviable position of mistress of the world. Hence, whenever an expression of gratitude for favors obtained or calamities averted was made in the name of religion, all were supposed to respond. The inability of the Christians to join in these national expressions, conducted under the patronage of paganism earned for them the antipathy of the unbelievers and the unenviable title of traitors to their country and insulters of the gods.* In vain did the meek followers of the Redeemer plead in their behalf religious inability; in vain did they offer an assurance of their readiness to maintain, even at the cost of their lives, the interest of the empire in all that was not contrary to conscience. Arguments of this nature were incomprehensible to the pagans, for liberty of conscience was a thing yet unknown. Cæsar was the legislator, he was the Pontifex Maximus, and any contradiction of his authority, even in matters purely religious, was a crime deserving of the heaviest penalty.

The conscientious discharge of their religious convictions then brought the Christians into immediate antagonism with the most sacred and cherished traditions of their

* Vide Gibbon.

country and race. They became, accordingly, a body in themselves, which, for reasons incomprehensible to the unbelievers, had departed from the practises, the traditions and laws of the nation. They did even more: they made war upon and derided the national faith, while the very character of polytheism being interwoven with all the relations of public and private existence, with all the transactions of peace and war, developed, at every turn and almost at every hour, this opposition and contempt of the Christians for the pagan belief.* Thus those faithful servants of God, by strictly obeying the dictates of conscience aroused against themselves the violent antipathy of their fellowmen, and earned for themselves the unjust appellations of traitors and atheists.† The position, accordingly, which the Christians thus necessarily occupied in the public esteem, opened the way for those evil reports and calumnious assertions which were speedily started against them. Men who were false to their country and their creed might be suspected of every enormity: no crime was too atrocious, no wickedness too great, for them to commit. It only required the tongue of the slanderer, or the lips of the malevolent to utter the charge, in order to have it believed. Even the most enlightened and impartial, whose business it was to examine reports and chronicle only the truth became victims to this popular prejudice. The account given by Tacitus of the character of the Christians, is evidence of this: for, speaking of the faithful under Nero on the occasion of the burning of Rome, he says: "With this view he (Nero) inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those men who under the vulgar appellation of Christians *were already branded with deserved infamy.*"‡ And further on, the same writer, though discrediting the alleged crime of

* Vide Gibbon. † See Apologies of Athenagoras and Tertullian, passim.
‡ Tacitus' Annals, book, 15.

burning the city laid to their charge, says: "The guilt of the Christians deserved, indeed, the most exemplary punishment." Suetonius exhibits a like prejudice when he calls the Christians "a sect of men who embraced a new and *criminal superstition*:" "Genus hominum superstitionis novæ ac maleficæ."*

There was a certain coloring or appearance of truth in the calumnies started against the faithful. The abominations, perpetrated by the heretics under the garb of religious, brought odium on the members of the true faith and cast discredit upon their holy profession. The pagans would not or could not distinguish between orthordoxy and heterdoxy. Enough for their purpose that crimes of a character unworthy to be repeated were perpetrated by persons calling themselves Christians. The innocent thus suffered for the guilty, and the orthordox received the punishment due to the heterodox. The story of an infant being slain and devoured by the faithful, in their service, had its origin most probably in the heretical usage of the Cataphrygians, who celebrated their Eucharist with the blood of a child.† The impurities, debaucheries, and the shamefully licentious proceedings of the Carpocratians, Valentinians and the Montanists, furnished ample material for the charges of obscenity and incest laid by the pagans at the door of the faithful. The doctrine of the first mentioned was, that in order to be united with God, we should practice uncleanness and follow our evil propensities in all they demanded.‡ It is not difficult to imagine the consequences that followed and the frightful excesses that the influence of such teaching must have occasioned. Valentinian assured his disciples that the exercise of the spirit with the flesh rendered lawful every sensual enjoyment. Prodicus and his followers per-

* Caii Suetonii Tranquilli duodecim Cæsares, page. 528.

† History of the Heresies by St. Liguori, page 41. ‡ Ibid, p. 38.

formed their devotions in a state of absolute nudity, while the Ascodragites are described as only another body of Bacchanalians.* Could paganism be much to blame for the opinion it formed of Christianity under such circumstances? Even yet, when credulity might be supposed to no longer exist and prejudice to have given way before the enlightenment of our day, how many and unfounded suspicions are there not entertained against the Catholic faith?†

The secretness, too, of the services in those primitive times, added not a little to the suspicions of wrong-doing entertained against the faithful by already prejudiced minds. For where there is secrecy and concealment, the mind, if evilly disposed, readily harbors suspicion and pictures to itself deeds of darkness and crime. Added to these as an incentive to the persecutor, were the personal motives of pelf and profit. Avaricious, unscrupulous agents of government found in the faith of the brethren a just plea for tyranny and a cloak for exactions. Timid, pusillanimous souls yielded, indeed, in several instances to their demands, and purchased their lives and their liberty at the double expense of property and conscience.‡ But others, nobler and more generous, as the martyr St. Lawrence, thwarted their impious efforts and laughed them to scorn. "Postulat præsul" says St. Leo, "ab immaculato sacrarii præsule,opes ecclesiasticas, quibus avidissimus inhiabat, inferri cui levitas castissimus, ubi eas repositas haberet ostendens, numerosissimos sanctorum pauperum obtulit greges."

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* History of the Heresies by St. Liguori, p. 41.

† See W. E. Gladstone's pamphlet questioning the loyalty of Catholics.

‡ The pagan officials were accustomed to grant vouchers to the Christians for a consideration attesting that the holders had complied with the law by offering sacrifice, whereas in reality they had not. Those who purchased such documents were called *libellatici*, or procurers of bills, and were considered as having denied the faith.—See Cyprian De Lapsis.

The sequel is best told in the language of the Church: "Strinxerunt ergo corporis membra posita super craticulam: subjicientibus prunas insultat levita Christi."

The prejudices aroused by the anticipations of public and personal loss were of a like powerful nature in instigating and fostering persecution against the faithful. The fear entertained by the Jews of losing their country, in case the Redeemer were permitted to preach, is a satisfactory evidence of the former. "The chief priests, therefore, and the Pharisees gathered a council and said: What do we, for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone, all will believe in him. And the Romans will come and take away our place and nation."* On a smaller scale, but from a kindred fear, the idol-makers of Ephesus were thrown into a state of commotion and raised such a disturbance as to endanger the life of the Apostle. "Now at that time there arose no small disturbance about the way of the Lord. For a certain man named Demetrius, who made silver temples for Diana, brought no small gain to the craftsmen whom calling together with the workmen of like acceptation, he said: Ye men know that our gain is by this trade. Now you see and hear that this Paul by persuasion hath drawn away a great multitude, not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, saying that they are not gods which are made by hands. So that not only this, our craft, is in danger of being vilified, but also the temples of great Diana shall be brought to nothing. Yea, and her majesty shall begin to be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth. Having heard these things they were full of anger, and cried out, saying: Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theatre, having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of

* John, chap. ii, v. 47-48.

Macedonia, companions of Paul. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not." * To these may be added, as illustrating the same, the exorcism by Paul of the pythonical spirit, an act of such clemency as called for the liveliest gratitude, but which served only to arouse against the Apostle the anger and hatred of the multitude. "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer a certain girl possessed with a pythonical spirit met us, *who brought to her masters much gain* by divining. This same, following Paul and us, cried out, saying: These men are the servants of the most high God who announce to you the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit: I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to go out from her. And he went out the same hour. But her masters seeing that the *hope of their gain was gone*, apprehending Paul and Silas brought them into the market-place to the rulers and, presenting them to the magistrates, they said: These men disturb our city being Jews, and preach a fashion which it is not lawful for us to receive nor observe, being Romans. And the people ran together against them; and the magistrates tearing off their clothes commanded them to be beaten with rods." †

Great as was the suffering which the Church had to endure from the Pagans and Jews for the motives assigned, far greater were the afflictions she was necessitated to undergo at the hands of her own unnatural children. Heresy has ever been her greatest torment and affliction: she has lost more by it than by all the persecutions she endured at the hands of her enemies. It is, according to St. Liguori, a plague which not only infects those contaminated with it, but even those with whom such associate. "And the fact is," says this great doctor, "that the spread of this

* Acts, chap. 19, v. 23-30. † Acts, chap., 16., v. 16-22.

plague in the world has injured the Church more than idolatry, and this good mother *has suffered more from her own children than from her enemies.*"* And it is the antipathy that heresy bears to the faithful of God, that stamps it as the creed of untruth, and its followers as the children of darkness. "If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you. . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."† Again the apostle St. John cautions us against being alarmed at this hatred of the world and assured of the inability of avoiding it, unless at the expense of the friendship of God. "Wonder not brethren if the world hate you:"‡ "whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God."§

Although, as has been stated, the motives that led to the persecution of the faithful, under the Roman emperors, were different from those assigned by Christian tyrants in after ages, yet in substance they concided; the alleged reasons in both instances being disloyalty to the authority of Cæsar. This has ever been the leading plea put forth in every age for the exercise of severity. It was the reason assigned by the enemies of Christ when, having arraigned him before Pilate, they demanded his death, and it is the same which is put forward to-day for the exercise of tyranny against the confessors of our times. "You are not conforming to the law of the nation," says Bismarck. "We have found this man," say the Jews, "perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar. . . . He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."‖

* Hist. of Heresies, preface, p. 24. † John, chap. xv., v. 18-20.
‡ John, chap. iii, v. 13. § James, chap. iv, v. 4. ‖ Luke, chap. xxiii., v. 2-5.

The same happened in the case of the Apostle. Hardly had Paul entered on his mission, than the old cry previously raised against his divine Master was reiterated and re-echoed in every land that he subsequently visited in the course of his missionary career. The murmurings that were indulged in against him at Antioch and Iconium, took a bitterer form by the time he reached Macedonia, but grew entirely beyond bounds on his arrival in Thessalonica, the multitude there rising in anger against him and his companions, and crying out in their wrath; "These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar." The reception he met with at Ephesus and Cæsarea differed in nothing from this, the old cry, of acting disloyally and seditiously, being repeated against him at almost every step. "We have found this to be a pestilent man and raising seditions,"* say the Ephesians. While at Cæsarea the multitude cried out: "Men of Israel, this is the man that teacheth all men everywhere *against the people and the law.*" †

How did the apostle conduct himself in the face of this opposition? Did he fear for himself and his cause? Did the violence, the threats and persecutions of his enemies prevent him from obeying his mission? His own words are the best authority in explanation of this: "But being aided by the help of God, I continue to this day witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come to pass." The same noble, undaunted answer the Church of God has ever returned to her persecutors. She fears not for herself or her cause. Adopting the language of the Apostle, she says to those who by threats and violence, would restrain her from fulfilling her mission: "I fear none of these things." The readiness with which she has ever encountered proscriptions and torments rather than

* Acts, chap. xxiv, v. 5. † Acts, chap. xxi, v. 28.

abandon the faith, is the best and most satisfactory proof hereof. Her legislative acts indicate the same; for in what council, I will ask, has the Church ever expressed alarm for her safety? When did she admit that her position was doubtful—that she had fears for the future? When, in order to save herself from destruction, did she lower her standard of truth, and alter her method of teaching? When did she accomodate herself to the fancies of the world? When, in short, did she, by the lips of her accredited ministers, acknowledge that her existence was at stake, and her success problematical? I answer, emphatically, never, and I challenge all history for a single admission of the kind. Sober, confident and majestic, conscious of her own divine origin and destiny, aware of her supremacy and power, she ever holds on in her career, regardless alike of the smiles and frowns of the world, undismayed and unalarmed by the threats, the violence and persecutions of her enemies.

In vain attempt, under such circumstances, the destruction of the Catholic Church! The number of times this has been essayed but miscarried, and the variety and quality of the means that have been adopted but without purpose, ought to satisfy the most unreasonable and unreflective that further attempts would be equally abortive. Better that the world should recognize and acknowledge the force of Gamaliel's advice and act consistently thereon: "Now, therefore, I say to you, refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work be of men it will come to naught. But if it be of God you can not overthrow it."* Eighteen hundred years of unvaried success have proved the truth of this. The reason why our holy religion cannot be destroyed is because it is an organization that has eternity written in its destiny: "And of his kingdom there shall be no end." The world is not power-

* Acts, chap. v., v. 38--39.

ful enough to overthrow a society established and defended by God. Of this Christ himself assures us in the well-known words: "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

If the Church were human it would have long since ceased to exist; it would have fallen before the power and machinations of its enemies. Like all merely human institutions, it would have existed for a time and have ceased to be. It would have had its infancy, its youth, maturity and old age. It would have arisen, developed, decayed and disappeared. But being divine, it is not subject to the vicissitudes of time or the casualties common to all that is human. The difference between the Church and the sects is, that the former is of God and the latter of man; the one is the creation of the Almighty, and the other the product of the human mind.

In common with all that is earthly the sects have a period of infancy, maturity and old age; they grow, they develop and decay. They are here to-day and away to-morrow. As the meteors that flash through the heavens and appear attractive for a moment, they appear and disappear in rapid and dazzling succession. They are in the moral world what variety is in the fashionable. They attract for a time, they captivate and are followed by the vain, the frivolous and the irreligious, but even by these they are discarded after a time. Their period of existence is never extensive. A couple of centuries at most, and the world is tired of them. Others more attractive are then adopted in their stead, for which in due course the same destiny is reserved, and so, age after age and century after century, the sects and the sectaries go on changing and varying after the manner of the ancient philosophical schools of Athens and Rome.

* Math., chap. xxvi., v. 18.

Different entirely is the Catholic Church; the same to-day, yesterday, and forever: weakness, variation and decay are unknown to her history. A wrinkle has never appeared on her brow. "A glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle."* Though the snows of centuries are on her head, the bloom of youth is upon her cheek. She is old, yet young; aged, yet strong; of the past, yet of the present. Taught by God and not by man, sustained and guided by his Holy Spirit she has never affirmed to-day what she denied to-morrow. She has never withdrawn in the hour of persecution what she put forth in the tranquillity of peace. Like the Apostles, the Church is ready to suffer and to die for the doctrine she teaches, nor is it in her power to abstain from proclaiming it. For it is not she but the Spirit of God that is with her, that uttereth the truth: "Lay it up, therefore, in your hearts not to meditate before how you shall answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay."† And again: "But when they shall deliver you up take no thought how or what to speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you."‡ Would that the world would recognize so simple a truth and become conscious accordingly of the inutility of persecuting the Church for her doctrine! But the world knoweth not the things of God: it is the carnal man mentioned by the Apostle. It hath eyes and seeth not, ears and heareth not, and so the spirit of violence and oppression continueth and shall endure even unto the end.

* Ephesians, chap. v., v. xxvii.—Canticles, chap. iv., v. 7.
† Luke, chap. xxi., v. 14-15. ‡ Math., chap. x., v. 19.

CHAPTER VIII.

FIRST PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH—ST. STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM—PERSECUTION IN JUDEA—THE CHRISTIANS SCATTERED—THE EMPEROR TIBERIUS ESPOUSES THE CAUSE OF THE CHRISTIANS—PROFOUND PEACE ENSUES—THE JEWS COMMENCE ANOTHER PERSECUTION—CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS PERSECUTION—IMPRISONMENT OF ST. PETER—HOW THE APOSTLES DISCHARGED THEIR COMMISSION AT THAT PERIOD—ST. PAUL'S LABORS—HIS SUFFERINGS AND IMPRISONMENT.

The first persecution of the Church was inaugurated by the Jews at Jerusalem. It was religious in its nature and originated in the same cause that led to the death of the Son of God. It was prompted by a blind, intolerant zeal, and evoked some of the worst passions of which the human heart is the seat. For the first few months after the crucifixion the hostility of the Jews confined itself to threats, imprisonments and scourgings.* It was thought by this means to silence the Apostles, to terrify the people, and thus to extinguish the religion. But, finding their efforts unavailing, and the number of the faithful rapidly increasing, the fury of the authorities grew beyond bounds and hurried them to the commission of those excesses which may be properly said to have inaugurated the first persecution. These were the deeds of blood which immediately followed and to which the martyrdom of St. Stephen was the prelude. St. Stephen, one of the first deacons or-

* Acts, chap. iv, v. 3.—"And they laid hands upon them and put them in hold till the next day: "—ibid, v. 21.—" But they threatening sent them away not finding how they might punish them because of the people: "—ibid, chap. 5, v. 40.—" And calling in the Apostles after they had scourged them they charged them that they should not speak at all in the name of Jesus and they dismissed them."

dained by the Apostles, was a man of much learning, of high repute and great importance among his countrymen. He was the first to give his life in the cause of divine truth. The religious education he had received, fitted him admirably for the role of a disputant and caused him to be regarded as a powerful opponent worthy to enter the lists with the most learned of the day. This coupled with his great fortitude and zeal * drew upon him the attention of the Rabbins and led to a controversy in which the chiefs of the synagogue † joined, but vainly sought for a victory, for they were "unable to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke." ‡

Overthrown in argument the holy deacon's opponents had recourse to those means ever employed by the world against divine truth; they attempted to silence by violence what they were unable to do by reason. But in order to give a coloring of justice to their acts, they suborned false testimony and charged Stephen with blasphemy. "And they set up false witnesses who said: This man ceaseth not to speak words against the holy place and the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the traditions which Moses delivered unto us." §

When asked by the high-priest what he had to answer to these allegations, the holy deacon replied in that luminous defence which constitutes the chief part of the seventh chapter of the Acts. In that admirable discourse replete with divine wisdom he answers indirectly the charge

* Acts, chap. vi, v. 5.—"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost: v. 8.—"And Stephen full of grace and fortitude did great wonders and signs among the people."

† Acts, chap. vi, v. 9.—"Now there arose some of that which is called the synagogue of the Libertines and of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians and of them that were of Cilicia and Asia disputing with Stephen."

‡ Ibid, v. 10.

§ Acts chap. vi, v. 13.

brought by his accusers by showing his reverence for the law and the prophets. At the same time he proved from the history of the people how the worship of the Almighty is not necessarily confined to a temple. Then turning upon his accusers, after reminding them how their forefathers had been rebellious to Moses and disobedient to the prophets, he boldly accused them of resisting the Spirit of God and of being the murderers of the Redeemer: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears ye always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you also. Which of the prophets have not your fathers perescuted? And they have slain them who have foretold of the comming of the Just One of whom you have been now the betrayers and murderers."* This fearless energetic protest against the crimes and impieties perpetrated by that people in the name and under the garb of religion, so angered his hearers that, losing all patience and control over themselves, they rushed incontinently upon him, dragged him from the tribunal of justice and stoned him to death without the city. His last words like those of his divine Master were a prayer for his murderers: "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Thus died in the most perfect sentiments of Christian charity, on the 26th of December, A. D. 33, the first Christian martyr, and from that day to this the blood of the faithful has never ceased to flow in testimony of divine truth.

The death of Stephen was followed by a general persecution of the faithful in Jerusalem and the provinces. It would be impossible, in the absence of historic accounts, to form an adequate idea of the sufferings of the brethren at this period, or of the numbers that perished in this first outburst of violence. But of the fierce character of the persecution we cannot have a doubt from what is related

* Acts vii. v. 51--52

of one who was a leader in conducting it. "And Saul, as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high-priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues that if he found any men and women of this way he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."*

The inflamed passions of the authors of the death of the Son of God must have hurried the authorities to the most criminal excesses. Those who imbrued their hands in the blood of the Redeemer were not likely to be restrained or to observe moderation when dealing with the disciples. Indeed the expression "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" sufficiently indicates this.

But what the enemies of religion intended for the destruction of the Church became under divine providence the occasion of its extension. For the faithful being necessitated, in consequence of the severity of their sufferings, to retire from Jerusalem, carried with them into the provinces, and thence into the countries whither they retired, the knowledge and practise of the law; while the Apostles, undaunted in the midst of the dangers that threatened them, nobly remained at their posts setting thereby an example to all future generations of that fortitude demanded of the chief pastor when danger threatens the flock. Thus the first attempt to destroy the Church, like so many others that have succeeded it, instead of effecting its purpose served only to advance the interests of religion.

How long the first persecution lasted, there are no means of determining; but that it was not of much duration is certain, for the Roman authorities quickly espoused the cause of the faithful. Upon receiving the account written by Pilate of the character of the Savior and the miraculous occurrences attending his death, Tiberius was so favora-

* Acts, chap, ix., v. 1-2.

bly impressed that he proposed to the Senate to enroll the Redeemer among the number of the gods.* But the measure not having originated with that body, the members took umbrage and the matter was dropped.† Tiberius, however, believing in the supernatural character of the Savior, supported the cause of the faithful and prohibited under penalty of death their being molested or accused. The result to the Church of this imperial command was that profound tranquillity which immediately followed and of which St. Luke speaks in the following terms: "Now the Church had peace throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria and was edified walking in the fear of the Lord and was filled with the consolation of the Holy Ghost."‡ The interests of the Church were materially advanced hereby. Communities were formed, churches erected, and the gospel preached with great effect all over the empire.

"Thus, then," says Eusebius, "under a celestial influence and coöporation, the doctrine of the Savior like the rays of the sun quickly irradiated the whole world. Presently in accordance with the divine prophecy the sounds of the inspired Evangelists and Apostles had gone throughout the earth and their words to the ends of the world. Through-

* Eusebius, book ii, chap. ii.—At postquam passus est Dominus Christus, atque a mortuis resurrexit, et discipulos suos ad prædicandum dimisit, Pilatus, præses Palestinæ provinciæ, ad Tiberium imperatorem atque ad senatum retulit de passione et resurrectione Christi, consequentibusque virtutibus, quæ vel per ipsum palam factæ fuerant, vel per discipulos ipsius in nomine ejus fiebant, et de eo quod certatim crescente plurimorum fide Deus crederetur. Tiberius cum suffragio magni favoris retulit ad senatum, ut Christus Deus haberetur. Senatus indignatione motus, quod non sibi prius secundum morem delatum esset, ut de suscipiendo cultu prius ipse decerneret, consecrationem Christi recusavit, edictoque constituit, exterminandos esse urbe Christianos; præcipue cum et Sejanus, præfectus Tiberii, suscipiendæ religioni obstinatissime contradiceret. Tiberius tamen edicto accusatoribus Christianorum mortem comminatus est.—Paulus Orosius, caput, iv., p. 460.

† By an ancient law no one could be enrolled among the gods without a formal decree of the Senate. "Vetus erat decretum, ne qui deus ab imperatore consecraretur, nisi a Senatu probatus."—Tertull opera, vol. i, p. 340.

‡ Acts chap. ix, v. 31.

out every city and village, like a replenished barn-floor, churches were rapidly found abounding and filled with members from every people. Those who in consequence of the delusions that had descended to them from their ancestors, had been fettered by the ancient disease of idolatrous superstition, were now liberated by the power of Christ through the teaching and miracles of His messengers; and, as if delivered from dreadful masters and emancipated from the most cruel bondage, on the one hand renounced the whole multitude of the gods and demons, andon the other hand confessed that there was only one true God the Creator of all things."* This happy condition of things did not long exist, for Tiberius dying on the 16th of March 37, the Jews were again at liberty under his successor, Caligula, to persecute the disciples. In this they were ably seconded by their sovereign, Herod Agrippa, the grandson of Herod the elder, by Aristobulus. He was the same whom Tiberius cast into prison at Rome, but whom his friend and patron, Caligula, on assuming the purple, placed on the throne of Juda. Entirely devoted to the emperor's interests and courting at the same time the affections of his countrymen and co-religionists, he set to persecuting the Christians. The first to feel the weight of his authority, was James the elder, cousin-german to our divine Lord. Him he cast into prison and beheaded: "And at the same time Herod, the king, stretched forth his hand to afflict some of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John."† This happened A. D. 44, and was quickly followed by the imprisonment of St. Peter whom his enemies vainly attempted to slay, for he was miraculously delivered out of their power by the angels of the Lord. "And seeing that it (the murder of James) pleased the Jews, he (Herod) proceeded to appre-

* Eusebius, book iii., chap. 3. † Acts, chap. xii. v., i.

hend Peter also. Now it was in the days of the azymes. And when he had apprehended him he cast him into prison delivering him to four files of soldiers to be kept, intending after the pasch to bring him forth to the people. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison. But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church to God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, that very night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the guard before the door kept the prison. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him and a light shone in the room, and he, striking Peter on the side, raised him up, saying: Arise quickly. And the chains fell off from his hands; and the angel said to him: Gird thyself and put on thy sandals. And he did so. And he said to him: Cast thy garments about thee and follow me. And going out he followed him and knew not that what was done by an angel was true, but thought he saw a vision. And having passed through the first and second wards they came to the iron gate that leadeth to the city which of itself opened to them. And going out they passed on through one street and immediately the angel departed from him. And Peter coming to himself said: Now I know truly that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me out of the hands of Herod and from all the expectations of the people of the Jews."*

Thus was miraculously delivered the prince of the Apostles at the very moment his enemies were preparing to put him to death. Two things here particularly arrest our attention, the one, the care taken by the authorities to secure their victim, he being kept constantly under the eye of his guard, and the other, the inanity of such a proceeding when measured against the power of God.

The chief characteristic of this primitive persecution,

* Acts, chap. xii., v. 3–11,

which was religious and fraudulent to the utmost degree, was not so much the fortitude displayed by the Apostles and their readiness in encountering every danger in the fulfillment of their important commission, nor the constancy of the faithful in suffering torments, imprisonments and death, rather than abandon the truth; but especially that strikingly miraculous display of divine power by which the Almighty was pleased to protect the interests of his holy religion and of which the liberation of Peter was an instance. Indeed so numerous and marvelous were the direct interpositions of the Lord at that period that it may be almost affirmed that every thing then was miraculous. The courage displayed by the Apostles and the success that attended their labors could be accounted for on no other reasonable grounds.

Much more directly and strikingly miraculous, however, were those instances where the Lord came to the aid of his servants in delivering them from the hands of their enemies or in curing by their intercession the maladies of the infirm. Such miraculous evidences of the divinity of the Church were needed by the exigencies of the times in order to convince the unbelievers—to establish the truth of religion and to give to the Apostles that authority necessary for rendering their mission successful. If in subsequent times the number of miracles happened to be less, the action of divine providence in preserving his Church is equally palpable and manifest.

From the date of the imprisonment of Peter, A. D. 45, to the commencement of the first general persecution under Nero, A. D. 64, the Church was sorely afflicted in divers ways. During those nineteen years the Apostles were never wholly at liberty to exercise the sacred ministry without incurring the risks consequent on a bold enunciation of divine truth. Then, as at an earlier stage of their mission,

the prophetic utterances of their heavenly Master found a realization in the treatment they met with at the hands of their enemies. Admonishing the people to avoid the bad example of the Scribes and the Pharisees and to embrace the good doctrine, Christ said: "Therefore behold I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you will put to death and crucify and some you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city."* It is true the blood of the faithful did not flow as profusely then as at a later period, but this is not to be attributed to any clemency on the part of the Jewish authorities or an unwillingness in their case to imbrue their hands in the blood of the faithful. It is rather to be referred to that equitable restraint imposed upon them by their masters, the Romans. Meantime, however, the Apostles had much to contend with: they had many dangers to encounter, many risks to undergo, many obstacles to surmount; nor did they in the face of those dangers and difficulties shrink from a bold enunciation of divine truth. They did not pass from country to country unknown, despised, neglected, insinuating their doctrines in secret and by stealth into the minds of the multitude. On the contrary they preached openly, publicly, fearlessly. They addressed the multitude in the synagogues, the market-places and thoroughfares. Their auditors were of the learned as well as of the illiterate, as well of the priests as of the people; while the converts they made were not confined to any individual class or sect, but were drawn alike from every rank and condition of life. The account furnished by the author of the Acts of the Apostles, of the missionary labors of the Apostle of the Gentiles, is the best evidence of this. Setting out from Jerusalem whither he had gone immediately after his miraculous conversion, A. D. 34, in the five and twenty years that elapsed till he

* Math. chap. 23, v. 34.

re-entered that city prior to his arrest and incarceration for the faith, he announced publicly and with effect in divers lands the glad tidings of redemption, everywhere confounding his adversaries, everywhere proving the abrogation of the law, and earning for himself a high reputation for culture, genius and oratory. The countries he successively evangelized were Syria, Phoenicia, Arabia, and the southern and central provinces of Asia, comprising Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Phrygia and Galatia. At Antioch, on commencing his ministry in company with Barnabas, he was invited by the chief of the synagogue to make an address to the people. "And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent to them saying: Ye men, brethren, if you have any word of exhortation to make to the people, speak."* Accepting the invitation the Apostle arose and addressed the assembly at length. Was that preaching the doctrine in secret and by stealth? The result of his discourse on that occasion, was the conversion of a large number of his hearers, amongst whom was probably St. Thecla, the first female honored by the Church as martyr, though in effect she did not die under her torments. From Antioch the Apostles went to Iconium where they were stoned by the populace and necessitated to leave. Thence they proceeded to Lystra in Lycaonia, where having cured a cripple, they obtained such reputation in the community that the people were ready to adore them as gods, crying out in wonder and admiration that the gods in the likeness of men had come upon the earth. But being disabused by some recent arrivals from Iconium, and persuaded that the Apostles were impostors, the same that a moment before cried out in their praises, now drove them contumeliously out of their town pelting them with stones. This fickle, inconstant character of the multitude led by de-

*Acts, chap. xiii, v. 15.

ceivers and zealots fully accounts for the conduct of the people in the case of our Blessed Redeemer, receiving him one day with every mark of affectionate regard, rending the air with canticles of praise and joy in his favor, and again clamoring vociferously for his death on the morning of Good Friday, crying out at the top of their voice: "Let him be crucified." *

Such an entire and sudden change of sentiment could not occur, except in a barbarous age, or amongst people fiercely intolerant and held in the bondage of a spiritual despotism by their religious authorities. A like instance could not be looked for at present; the character and temper of the times are against it, though it must be acknowledged that even yet the power of the demagogue is not inconsiderable.

At Philippi, whither the Apostles proceeded from Lycaonia, they met with even a more unfavorable reception than at Antioch or Iconium, for there they were cast into prison and scourged without even the form of a trial, a proceeding against which they energetically protested, and not without effect. Taking their stand upon the laws of the country, they obliged the authorities to acknowledge the illegality of their proceedings. In this they were aided by an accidental occurence, for the Jewish authorities taking alarm at an earthquake which happened at this time, and regarding it as an expression of divine displeasure against their proceedings, sent to liberate the Apostles. To this Paul and Barnabas firmly demurred. "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men that are Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now they thrust us out privately. Not so, but let them come and discharge us themselves. And the sergeants told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid, hearing that they were Romans. And coming

* Matt. chap. xxvii, v. 23.

they entreated them and bringing them out they desired them to depart out of the city."* In thus obliging the authorities to give them an honorable discharge, the Apostles were only acting on their natural and national rights; for in their case the law was doubly violated, it being provided by Roman legislation that no one should be condemned without a trial, and that no Roman citizen should be subjected to the indignity of the lash. The outrage was public, the reparation also should be public. Herein we have a profitable example of how ecclesiastical superiors should defend themselves against the maltreatment of their enemies as long as the laws of the land grant them the right. To suffer for Christ and for justice sake is noble and worthy of a Christian; but to suffer ourselves to be stripped of our rights and trampled under foot on the plea of humility, is pusillanimity of soul, and contrary to the action of the Apostle: "Not so, but let them come and discharge us themselves."

We next hear of the Apostle in Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus, in which places he gained over great numbers of his hearers, preaching publicly, and not unfrequently in the synagogues and market-places: all which abundantly shows, if evidence were needed, that the first heralds of the gospel did not pass unnoticed and despised from place to place, gaining favor for their teaching among the illiterate and introducing their doctrine by stealth and in secret. The time was now drawing near when this illustrious champion of the Lord was to give a stronger evidence of the love of his divine Master than any he had hitherto offered, by sealing with his blood the truth of the doctrine he announced. Five and twenty years had elapsed since, as a convert to the truth, he entered Jerusalem for the first time, causing consternation amongst the disciples who "were afraid of him

* Acts, chap. xvi., v. 37-39.

not believing that he was a disciple," and this, his second entry with the foreknowledge of the afflictions that awaited him there: "And now behold bound in the Spirit I go to Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost in every city witnesseth to me saying: that bonds and afflictions wait for me at Jerusalem."*

From this we learn how certainly and frequently the Apostle was forewarned of the dangers and afflictions that awaited him at Jerusalem whither he was summoned by the Lord. "The Holy Ghost in every city witnesseth to me saying that bonds and afflictions wait for me at Jerusalem." In this the Almighty desired to prove the courage and constancy of his servant and to leave upon record in his conduct a noble example of that firmness and resolution demanded of the pastors of the Church whenever there is question of fulfilling the work of the ministry. It was to Jerusalem the Apostle was called and thither he hastened regardless of the pains and penalties that awaited him in that capital. What did he, who had undergone so much for his Lord, care for the displeasure and anger of the Jews? What did he, who was insulted and persecuted at Antioch, stoned at Lystra, scourged at Philippi and all but slain at Ephesus, mind the dangers and afflictions that awaited him at Jerusalem now that his course was nearly run. To be dissolved and to be with Christ was his ambition and his gain: "But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ a thing by far the better."† "Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung that I may gain Christ."‡

It was at Miletus, on arriving from Greece, while hasten-

* Acts, chap. xx, v. 22-23.
† Philip, chap. i, v. 23.
‡ Ibid, chap. iii, v. 8.

ing to Jerusalem, that he bade adieu to the bishop and pastors of Ephesus and the neighboring churches. In this touching address, in which he deeply moved the minds of his hearers and caused them to give expression to their grief in an abundance of tears, he briefly reminded them of the fidelity with which, since his advent amongst them, he had discharged the episcopal functions, regardless of the dangers and difficulties that he encountered. Then, with that ardent solicitude which ever distinguishes the true pastor of souls, he carefully warned them against the danger of remissness in the discharge of their pastoral duties, foretelling at the same time the arrival of sectaries among them upon his departure: "And when he had said these things kneeling down he prayed with them all."*

On arriving in Cæserea he was again distinctly forewarned of the danger that immediately awaited him. Thither from Judea came Agabus the prophet, who upon the occasion of his visit to the Apostle, at the house of Philip the evangelist, took the following manner of expressing to him, on the part of the Lord, what the Jews were preparing for him at Jerusalem: "And as we tarried there for some days, there came from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. Who when he was come to us, took Paul's girdle; and binding his own feet and hands, he said: Thus saith the Holy Ghost: The man whose girdle this is, the Jews shall bind in this manner in Jerusalem, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."† Hearing these words, the faithful were sorely afflicted and with tears and entreaties earnestly supplicated the Apostle to abstain from exposing his life at Jerusalem. But vain were these solicitations. The nobility of Paul's character, his high sense of duty and that utter contempt of all personal danger which so characterized him in all his apostolate, when there was

*Acts, chap. xx, v. 36. † Acts, chap. xxi. v. x-xi.

question of the love of his Redeemer, answered the tears and entreaties of his friends in these words: "What do you mean weeping and afflicting my heart. For I am ready not only to be bound but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." And when they could not prevail upon him, says St. Luke, they ceased, saying: "The will of the Lord be done." Thus with these heroic dispositions did Paul betake himself to Jerusalem. He was accompained by St. Luke and some of the brethren. His arrival in the city was not long unknown to the Jews. The fame of his efforts had been already well understood by them. No more powerful and formidable adversary had appeared against them up to that date. He had preached with success from Antioch to Athens and from the confines of Arabia to the islands of Greece. To Jew and Gentile, to Greek and barbarian alike he announced the word of divine truth; while, on the other hand, his former position as an ardent persecutor of the Christians contrasted so strangely with his zeal as an Apostle as to make him an object of special displeasure and hatred to the Jews.

The day after his arrival he visited James, bishop of the place, and in presence of the assembled clergy, recounted the marvelous things which the Almighty had done by his hands. Hearing these wonders the assembly was moved and glorified God. But fearing that the calumnious reports circulated against him might be the cause of considerable trouble they prayed him to discredit them by a practical proof. The method suggested was to take four of the brethren and to solemnly consecrate them as Nazarenes to the Lord in the temple. His compliance was not sufficient to avert the storm which the timidity of the clergy vainly sought to avoid. For before the term fixed for the legal purifications of the Nazarenes had elapsed,

the Apostle was recognized and such a storm raised by his enemies that his life was in jeopardy and would have been forfeited only for the seasonable intervention of the tribune, Claudius Lycius, in coming to his aid. This pagan authority, with a commendable promptitude and zeal to prevent the shedding of innocent blood, hastened with some of his troops to the scene of the outrage, whom when the rioters had noticed, they abstained from their attack on the apostle. "And when they saw the tribune and the soldiers they left off beating Paul."*

The charges laid against the Apostle on that occasion, and which served to arouse the fury of the populace, were that he had everywhere preached against the law and Moses, and had violated the sanctity of the temple, by introducing into it persons who were Gentiles. Both assertions were wholly unfounded, the latter being grounded on a gratuitous assumption on account of his being seen in the city, in company with Trophimus, an Ephesian gentile. The populace, however, as is ever the case when their passions are aroused, did not stop to consider the truth of the charge, but, with that blindness and impetuosity which characterized them in their dealings with the prophets and the Redeemer, rushed tumultuously upon Paul, dragged him from the temple, and were on the point of despatching him, when the civic authority named above came to his aid. Unable to learn the precise nature of his crime, on account of the confusion and tumult of the populace, and desirous of saving him from the violence of his enemies, the tribune ordered him to be conveyed to the castle. Before entering, Paul solicited and obtained permission to make an address to the people. Thereupon entering into a succinct account of his life and labors, he stated how he was a Jew, born at Tarsus, educated under

* Acts, chap xxiv, v. 32.

Gamaliel, and for a time a determined opponent of the followers of Christ. Then going on to declare how he was miraculously converted and baptized, he continued to state how he was commissioned by the Lord to carry the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles, which latter expression so angered the minds of his hearers, that crying out with a common accord, they shouted against him, exclaiming: "Away with such a one from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live!"* It was plainly unadvisable for him to continue his discourse, and he accordingly concluded, when he was conducted into the castle. But by a strange violation of the first principles of justice, and in open disregard of man's natural rights, which guarantee to every one a security against punishment before being heard, orders were given for his being beaten and scourged, a proceeding which was prevented being carried into effect only by the Apostle claiming his right as a citizen. "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned.?"† This so alarmed his captors, that, satisfied of the fact of his citizenship, they immediately desisted, and abstained from tormenting and torturing him.

The tribune, desiring to know more of his case, but fearing to get at it in a manner that might compromise him with the authorities, ordered Paul to be brought on the following day before the council and the priests. The Apostle had hardly opened his mouth, and protested his innocence, when his judge Annanias ordered him to be smitten on the face, an outrage which Paul indignantly resented in these noble, majestic words, so much in keeping with his entire character as a fearless, intrepid defender of the truth: "God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest me to be struck."‡ See-

* Acts, chap. xxii., v. 25. † Ibid. ‡ Acts, chap. xxiii., v. 3.

ing that the tribunal before which he was arraigned was composed of Pharisees and Sadducees, whose religious convictions were so entirely opposed, he took advantage of this circumstance to favor his cause by declaring himself a Pharisee, thereby conciliating to his interest one part of the assembly. This avowal succeeded entirely according to his desires, for, "when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the multitude was divided." * Once more in order to avoid personal violence being offered to him, or, as the author of the Acts expresses it, "being torn to pieces," † Claudius Lysius found it necessary to remand him to the castle. This was a dark and trying hour for the Apostle; it required all the courage and fortitude of his whole soul to bear up against his adversities; nor was he left unsupported in this hour of trial. For, on the following night, the Redeemer, appeared to him and told him to be firm: "And the night following the Lord standing by him said: Be constant; for as thou has testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." ‡

The hatred and malice of the Jews against the Apostle are very clearly demonstrated by the circumstances that happened immediately upon his being withdrawn from their hands. Upon being removed into the castle more than forty of the people, with the connivance and approbation of the authorities, formed a conspiracy and registered an oath not to eat or drink till they had slain the Apostle. Of this St. Paul was advised by his nephew whom he despatched to the tribune to inform him of the circumstance. The latter, alive to the danger that threatened the life of the Apostle, immediately took steps to prevent the contemplated murder. To this end he hurried off Paul at

* Acts, chap. xxiii., v. 7. † Ibid, v. 16.
‡ Ibid, v. 11.

midnight to Cæsarea with a guard of horse and foot and the following letter for the governor:

"Claudius Lysius to the most excellent governor, Felix, greeting.—This man being seized by the Jews and ready to be killed by them, I rescued, coming in with the soldiers, having understood that he is a Roman. And wishing to know the cause which they objected to him I brought him forth into the council, whom I found to be accused of questions of their law; but having nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of chains. But when it was told me that they had prepared an ambush for him I sent him to thee signifying also to his accusers to plead before thee. Farewell."*

Five days after Paul's arrival in Cæsarea he was followed by Annanias, the high priest, and an informer, Tertullus. The antipathy and rage of the authorities are clearly manifested by this, when even a high priest would condescend to associate with an informer, a creature even held in merited contempt by all honorable men. There was also in this instance another antipathy to be overcome, that of holding correspondence with or demanding justice from the Gentiles. The proud indomitable spirit of the Jews, who for centuries enjoyed the singular privilege of being the chosen people of the Lord, was wounded and humiliated when necessity demanded them to hold communication with these whom they doubly detested as invaders and pagans, and whom they constantly despised and regarded as inferiors. At any and every cost, however, the Apostle had to be convicted and got out of the way. Hence, the lamentable spectacle of a high priest hastening in company with a public informer to Cæsarea to testify against the Apostle. Tertullus began his address very artfully by attributing to the governor,

* Acts, chap. xxiii., v. 26-30.

in order to conciliate him in his favor, that peace and tranquillity which reigned in the country. Then, coming directly to his case, he inveighed against the Apostle as a public disturber, a pestilent fellow and chief of a sect called Nazarenes.* These, which at best were vague and indefinite charges, were, however, the worst he could make. The Apostle being called upon for his defense admitted being of the religion his accuser denominated a heresy, but as regarded the allegation of his being a disturber of the public tranquillity, he emphatically denied the allegation. "Neither in the temple" said he, "did they find me disputing with any man or causing any concourse of the people, neither in the synagogue, nor in the city. Neither can they prove to me the things of which they now accuse me."† In the latter part of his address, he stated the object of his coming to Jerusalem, which was to assist his indigent brethren with the alms of the faithful. The governor convinced of his innocence, but unwilling to give offense to the Jews, had the unpardonable weakness to remand the Apostle, instead of declaring him innocent and setting him at liberty as he should. Avarice had something to do with his action, for by detaining the Apostle he hoped to obtain for his release some of the alms that had been collected for the poor. In this, however, he was doomed to disappointment, for all that the Apostle had brought with him for that purpose was already distributed.

For the next two years Paul remained a close prisoner at Cæsarea. At the expiration of that period Felix was succeeded in the office of governor by Festus. On arriving in Jerusalem, in order to take possession of the government of the country he was earnestly solicited by the Jewish authorities to have Paul brought to that city for trial, their object being not the furtherance of the ends

* Acts, chap. xxiv., v. 5. † Ibid, xxiv., v. 12-13.

of justice, but in order to have an opportunity of slaying him on the way. To their urgent demands the governor replied that the trial should be conducted at Cæsarea, and that whoever had anything to charge against the Apostle should go there. Ten days later when Festus arrived, Paul was brought up for examination. Many and grievous crimes were laid to his charge, but without any satisfactory proof. Festus, however, like his predecessor, was a weak-minded man, and unwilling to give offense to the Jews, he considered the best way of extricating himself from the difficulty would be by sending the Apostle to Jerusalem for trial. But to this Paul, with his usual firmness and independence of character, firmly demurred, claiming his rights as a Roman citizen, and appealing to Cæsar: "If I have injured them or committed any thing that deserveth death I refuse not to die: but if there be nothing in those things whereof they accuse me, no man can deliver me to them. I appeal to Cæsar." Noble and dignified protest, and in every way worthy of the Apostle! It necessitated a different course to be taken with him and it was accordingly determined to send him to Rome.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. PAUL IS SENT A PRISONER TO ROME—THE JEWS AGAIN PERSECUTE AT JERUSALEM—MARTYRDOM OF JAMES, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM—BURNING OF ROME—NERO PERSECUTES THE CHRISTIANS—ST. PAUL LEAVES ROME—MARTYRDOM OF SS. PETER AND PAUL—PUNISHMENT OF THE PERSECUTORS—HEROD—PILATE—CAIPHAS—HEROD AGRIPPA.

Before the governor's resolution, as narrated in the preceding chapter, of despatching Paul to Rome, was carried into effect, Agrippa II, king of Judea, happened to come on a visit to Festus. Being informed of the proceedings taken against the Apostle, he expressed a desire of seeing so remarkable a man. Paul was accordingly brought into his presence and spoke to such effect as almost to make him a convert: "In a little thou persuadest me to become a Christian."* Agrippa and Festus understanding the falsehoods of the charges made against the Apostle, were willing to grant him his liberty; but as he had appealed to Cæsar, the original resolution was adhered to, and Paul was despatched to Rome. He was given in charge, with others, to a centurion named Julius. The voyage, which was painful and tedious, occupied about five months, three of which were passed at Malta, where the Apostle performed several miracles, but notably that of healing Publius' father of a fever, and bloody flux: "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux. To whom Paul entered in, and when he had prayed and laid his hands on him he healed him."†

* Acts, chap. xxvi, v. 28.

† Acts, chap. xxviii., v. 8.

Paul arrived in Rome, A. D. 61. He was not cast into prison immediately, but was permitted to occupy an apartment of his own, under a guard detailed for that purpose. How far this interfered with his personal liberty, it would be difficult to say, but that it was galling and restrictive is clear, from the fact that he was bound by a chain.* The freedom he enjoyed, such as it was, is attributed by some to the admiration in which his character was held by the Romans, but more probably to the moderation of the prefect of the prætorium, Africanus Burrus, whose influence over the mind of the emperor was considerable. During a period of two years, the Apostle remained a prisoner in this manner, but always at liberty to preach the divine word to all who repaired to him, and, as may be gathered from the Acts and from his epistles, with much effect. How he gained his liberty, and whither he repaired on obtaining it, is unknown; but that he left the capital and preached for sometime elsewhere, is readily acknowledged.

While Paul was a prisoner in Rome, the Jews were at their old work in Jerusalem, persecuting the Christians. Enraged at finding their victim withdrawn from their hands, and not likely to be punished with death, they were ready to give expression to their hatred of Christianity in a manner equally practical; but circumstances necessitated them to dissimulate for a time. An opportunity, however, shortly occurred. Festus the governor dying, before the arrival of a successor in office, Annanias, the high priest, availed himself of the opportunity, which this absence of restraint from superior authority granted him, to persecute the religion, and if possible to extinguish it in the blood of its members. To this end James, the bishop of Jerusalem, became the object of his solicitude; but as that venerable man was highly esteemed for his virtues, being surnamed

*Acts, chap. xxxiii., v. 20.

the Just, and greatly in favor with his countrymen, it was plainly injudicious to proceed openly and with violence against him. Any attempt of this nature was sure to recoil on the perpetrators themselves, and certain to create a favorable impression in favor of the disciples. Accordingly, dissimulating their intentions, and endeavoring to gain over the Apostle by cajolery, the high priest and elders approached him and said: "We entreat thee to persuade all that are coming to the feast of the passover rightly concerning Jesus, for we all have confidence in thee. Stand, therefore, upon a wing of the temple, that thou mayest be conspicuous and high, and thy words may be easily heard by all the people; for all the tribes have come together on account of the passover with some of the Gentiles also." * He was then conducted to the conspicuous part of the temple, where, it was hoped, he would through weakness and complaisance, to the will of the authorities, either openly apostatize or at least make such a dissimulation of the faith as would favor the interests of his enemies, and mislead the multitude. "Oh thou just man (cried out his tempters), whom we ought all to believe, since the people are led astray after Jesus that was crucified, declare to us what is the door to Jesus that was crucified." That was a supreme moment for the religion; rarely was it given to an Apostle to bear testimony to the divinity of the Son of God under more impressive circumstances. The eyes of all Judea were intently fixed upon him; the ears of the populace were open and eager to drink in his every word and to believe or not, as he affirmed or denied. Below, in his immediate presence were numbers of Jews and Gentiles, who had come from a distance, and who were sure on their return to spread amongst their acquaintances what they had learned from the Just One himself concerning the Savior.

* Hegesippus apud Eusebium, b. ii, chap. xxiii.

On the other hand, awaiting him as the penalty of fidelity to conscience and to office, was the displeasure and anger of the authorities, and the almost absolute certainty of death which they were ready to inflict. It was indeed a time of anxiety and suspense for the faithful. What a source of sorrow and scandal it would be to them if their bishop, an Apostle and blood relation of the Redeemer himself, were to betray them at that critical moment by denying the faith. God surely would not suffer such an evil. Then in answer to the question put to him, "Declare to us what is the door to Jesus that was crucified," the Apostle raising his voice cried out in a loud and audible tone: "Why do ye ask me respecting Jesus the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens on the right hand of the Great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven."* Hardly had the words escaped his lips than the cry was raised: "The Just One hath erred: we have mistaken in affording such testimony of Jesus:" and rushing madly upon him they cast him from the eminence where he was standing, and while some commenced stoning him, a fuller approached and beat out his brains with a club. The last words of the Apostle were, like those of Stephen and of his divine Master, a prayer for his murderers: "Oh Lord, God and Father, I entreat thee to forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Thus died nobly attesting to the divinity of the Son of God, A. D. 62., James surnamed the Just, and first bishop of Jerusalem.

During the two years that the Apostle was a prisoner at Rome, as has been stated, he was at liberty to preach the gospel to all who visited him. This added much to the spread of the faith and caused it to find a home even in the palace of the Cæsars. How he obtained his liberty and whither he proceeded on gaining it, is a matter of doubt,

* Hegesippus apud Eusebium.

but that there was some form of trial in his case is clear from his epistle to Timothy wherein he says: "At my first defense no man stood with me, but all forsook me."

It was during the Apostle's absence from Rome that the great fire occurred which laid the capital in ruins. This happened, A. D. 64. The popular belief attributed the tragic event to Nero, the best proof of whose guilt is that he sought for a substitute in the persons of the offending Christians. At first he attempted to turn the calamity to his own profit by affecting a great compassion for the sufferers, in order to increase his own popularity. To this end he threw open his gardens and had erected therein temporary buildings for the homeless. Thither he transported large quantities of provisions in order to supply the wants of the destitute. At the same time he commenced preparations for the rebuilding of the city on a larger and grander scale. But the minds of the people were too much enraged against the author of their ruin to be appeased by such means. It was then that he conceived the idea of casting the odium on the Christians. The task was not very difficult nor unworthy of the brutal murderer of his own mother and wife. Those whom the popular credulity had already regarded as the basest of mortals and the pest of society might be readily accredited with any atrocity however nefarious. This the emperor knew and selected his victims accordingly. The height to which the popular fury ascended, the numbers that fell victims to it, and the varied and excruciating torments they endured, may be judged from the following: "Nero," writes Tacitus, "wished to substitute in his own stead victims for public indignation. With this view he inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those who under the vulgar appellation of Christians were already branded with deserved infamy. They derived their name and origin from Christ, who in

the reign of Tiberius had suffered death by the sentence of the procurator, Pontius Pilate. For a while this dire superstition was checked, but it again burst forth, and not only spread itself over Judea, the first seat of this mischievous sect, but was even introduced into Rome the common asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. The confessions of those who were seized, discovered a great multitude (ingens multitudo) of their accomplices and they were all convicted, not so much for setting fire to the city as for their hatred of human kind. They died in torments, and their torments were embittered by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses, others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the fury of dogs; others, again, smeared over with combustible material, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle which was accompanied with a horse race, and honored with the presence of the emperor, who mingled with the populace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Christians deserved, indeed, the most exemplary punishment, but the public abhorrence was changed into commiseration from the opinion that the unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the public welfare as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant."*

One hardly knows what to condemn most in the foregoing, the cruelty of the emperor in devoting the Christians to indiscriminate slaughter, or the blindness and bigotry of the historian in declaring them deserving of punishment. Were the followers of Him whose last words on the cross were a prayer for his enemies, so unmindful of their calling as to be haters of mankind? Were they whose lips were daily employed in invoking blessings on their tormentors, whose doctrines taught them to do good unto all,

* Tacitus' Annals.

enemies of their kind? Why did not the Roman historian specify some particular charge, or, as in the case of the burning of the city, why not have advanced some credible proof before pronouncing those persons, on the strength of popular rumour and prejudice, worthy of exemplary punishment?

The persecution commenced by Nero was not confined to the walls of Rome, but extended throughout the provinces. Some indeed have attempted to make the contrary appear* and have invoked in their aid the historian just named. But Tacitus nowhere asserts anything of the kind; on the contrary, his language leads us to believe in the general character of the persecution, for he assigns as its principal cause, the Christians' hatred of mankind. The same is to be concluded from the language of Suetonius, who, without alluding to the burning of the city at all, refers the punishment of the faithful to the wickedness and reprehensible character of their doctrines, styling them a "Genus hominum superstitionis novæ et maleficæ." It is not likely, the cause being general, that the persecution was partial. But whatever may have been the character of the first outburst of violence against the faithful, it is certain, that the persecution was eventually extended throughout the empire. For this we have the testimony of such ancient and respectable writers as Lactantius,† and Sulpicius Severus. Plainer and more emphatic still are the words of Orosius when he says: "Nam primus Romæ Christianos suppliciis et mortibus adfecit ac per omnes provincias pari persecutione excruciari imperavit."‡ To these may be added Severus' testimony: "Post etiam datis legibus religio vetebatur palamque edictis propositis Christianum non esse licebat."§ From these no

* See Dodwell, Horæ Cyprianicæ.

† See note, page 84.

‡ Paulus Orosius, chap, vii, page, 473.

§ Vide Sulpicium Severum sacræ historiæ, lib. ii.

reasonable doubt can remain on the mind as to the general character of the persecution. How great the numbers were that perished in it there are no means of determining, even approximately. The expression "ingens multitudo" means, indeed, a vast number, but, to how many thousand these should be limited, it would be impossible to say.

On regaining his liberty, as has been stated above, St. Paul quitted the capital and revisited, it is thought, the oriental churches, where he remained till after the burning of Rome. His presence being then more needed at the capital to sustain the courage of the faithful in contending with their implacable enemies, he returned, according to Dionysius of Corinth in company with St. Peter. Anasterus, on the other hand, affirms that St. Peter was in Rome at the time, a circumstance entirely more probable as being the seat of his episcopate and the field of his missionary labors. However that may be, it is certain that both preached at that time to the faithful in the capital. The violence of the persecution must already have considerably subsided by the time the Apostle arrived, for otherwise we could not account for the freedom he enjoyed in appearing in public and confronting the Magician. The partial leniency, too, observed against him and the prince of the Apostles, in casting them into prison rather than in immediately beheading them, is another evidence in favor of this.

The precise grounds on which the Apostles were arrested and imprisoned are variously stated. St. Clement in his epistle to the Corinthians attributes them to the hatred and jealousy of the Jews. St. Anasterus refers them to the antipathy created in the minds of the populace by the Apostles' fearless denunciation of vice; while St. John Chrysostom is of opinion, that it was the conversion of Nero's companions in vice, which especially drew upon them the

emperor's displeasure. Others there are who would make the incarceration of the Apostles depend on the victory they gained over Simon the magician. To our mind, however, none of these reasons is at all necessary to account for the fact. For if being a Christian at all was so much an offense at that moment, how much more to be a leader of the religion. At such a time, it surely required nothing more to draw on one's self the displeasure of the authorities and to be deemed worthy of chains and death, than the simple steadfast belief in and open profession of the Christian faith.

For nine months SS. Peter and Paul remained confined in the Mamertine prison at the foot of the capitol. On the 29th of June, A. D. 66, they were led out to execution by the order of Nero. Different deaths awaited them. St. Peter, like his divine Master, ended his days on the cross, being crucified, at his own request, head downward; while St. Paul, in consequence of his rights as a Roman citizen, obtained what in the eyes of the world was a more honorable death, being decapitated. Much difference of opinion exists as to the time and place of their death. The commonly received opinion, however, and that adopted by the universal Church, is that they died together. This is founded on the authority of the Roman council held under Gelasius I., in which it is affirmed that the apostles died, "Pariter, uno tempore uno eodemque die."*

I shall now record in accordance with the spirit of this work the punishment with which divine providence visited the persecutors of his holy Church, down to the date at which we are arrived. Though nowhere indicated in holy writ that such would ever be the portion of persecutors in this life, history, as we shall see, witnesses almost uniformly to the fact. Indeed so constant

* See Belonino.

has been the case that it may be almost affirmed that such is the order of divine providence; for nearly all who have signalized themselves as persecutors of Christ and his flock have sooner or later fallen under the divine vengeance even in this life.

The first to suffer the penalty of his crime, as being the first to transgress against divine truth, in opposing the religion of the Redeemer, was Herod, king of Judea. This was the same who in his blind, unrelenting rage to destroy the Son of God, mercilessly slew "all the male children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men."* Herod was a tyrant by nature. He murdered his own wife and children. But it was the attempted act of deicide that brought upon him the special vengeance of heaven and caused his end to be as frightful as his life had been wicked. He was punished thus: consumed by a burning fever and an insatiable desire for food, which nothing could appease, the painfulness of his situation was further increased by swelling of the legs, inflamation of the ventricle, convulsions through all the members and a corruption of the inferior part of the abdomen in which were generated great masses of worms that preyed upon him whilst living and consumed him when dead.† Thus died the first notable enemy of the Son of God and who is there that cannot recognize in his unhappy end the just vengeance of heaven.

The next to experience the consequence of his misdeeds was Pilate, the Roman governor, who shamefully betrayed the cause of justice, by handing over the Redeemer to the fury of the Jews, though believing Him innocent.‡ Pilate's disgrace and death happened thus. Being accused before the pro-consul, Vitellius, of unwonted cruelty in the dis-

* Math., chap. ii., v. xvi. † See Josephus. ‡ Math. chap. xxvii., v. 24-26.

charge of his duty, he was ordered to repair immediately to Rome, to answer before the tribunal of Cæsar, to the charges preferred against him. The trial not resulting favorably to his interests, he was deposed from his prefecture, exiled the capital, and banished to Vienne, where overwhelmed by the weight of his misfortunes, and giving way to despondency, he put an end to his life by committing suicide. It fared nothing better with Caiphas, the high-priest, and Annas, his father-in-law, both of whom ended their days in like manner. The former was deposed from his office of high-priest by Vitellius, and, in his rage and despair, committed suicide, his example being followed by his unworthy father-in-law.

The death of Herod Antipas and of Herod Agrippa, the former the murderer of St. John the Baptist, and the latter of St. James the greater, is a further illustration of the fact that even in this life the vengeance of heaven overtaketh the persecutors of religion. Herod Antipas, being convicted of a conspiracy with Arsace, king of the Parthians, was deposed by Caligula from his office, banished into Gaul, and in a vain attempt to escape, died miserably in Spain. Still more signal was the fate of Agrippa, three years later, after he had ascended the throne. The manner of his death is related, both by the author of the Acts, and by Josephus, but more fully by the latter. It is remarkable too, that it was not till he had raised his hand against the vicar of Christ, that the divine vengeance overtook him. After relating how St. Peter had been delivered from prison by an angel, St. Luke continues: "Now when day was come, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, having examined the keepers, he commanded they should be put to death: and going down from Judea to Cæsarea, he abode there. And he

was angry with the Tyrians and the Sidonians. But they with one accord came to him, and having gained Blastus, who was the king's chamberlain, they desired peace because their countries were nourished by him. And upon a day appointed, Herod being arrayed in kingly apparel, sat in the judgment seat and made an oration to them. And the people made acclamation saying: It is the voice of a god and not of a man: And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honor to God, and *being eaten up by worms, he gave up the ghost.*" *

The account given by Josephus of the foregoing, differs only in the fullness of the details.†

* Acts, chap. xii, v. 18 23. † Josephus, Antiquities.

CHAPTER X.

PUNISHMENT OF THE JEWS—REVOLUTION IN JUDEA—VESPASIAN CHARGED BY NERO TO QUELL THE REVOLT AND TO PUNISH THE OFFENDERS—HE TAKES GABARA, JOTAPAT AND OTHER PLACES—HE BECOMES EMPEROR AND ENTRUSTS THE COMMAND TO TITUS—THE JEWS FALL BACK UPON JERUSALEM—THE CITY IS INVESTED—TERRIBLE PRIVATIONS—A TRENCH CAST AROUND THE DOOMED CITY—THE PERPETUAL SACRIFICE CEASES—THE SACRED SCRIPTURES FULFILLED.

In the preceding chapter we have seen how the first persecutors of divine truth, experienced in their untimely and tragic deaths, the just retribution of their unhallowed acts. Other and more notable instances remain to be recorded, and preëminently the chastisement of the Jews as a people. In the entire annals of the past, no more remarkable instance is furnished, of the displeasure of heaven and the severity with which the Almighty punishes, even in this life, flagrant transgressions against His divine majesty. The crime of the rejection and the murder of the Son of God, being the greatest and darkest on record, the punishment has been accordingly the weightiest and most signal in history.

Having slain the Redeemer, and despised the Apostles, thereby effectually closing the door of divine mercy and shutting out from themselves every ray of divine truth, they left nothing undone to prevent the diffusion of that creed, of which He, whom they treated and punished as an impostor, was author and head. Hence their constant though fruitless persecution of the Apostles; hence their imprisonment of Peter, their scourging of Paul, and murder

of James. But the measure of their iniquity was at length filled up, and the moment of their chastisement was at hand. The place is still pointed out, directly under the brow of Mount Olivet, where the Redeemer, surrounded by his Apostles, uttered the prophetic announcement of the destruction of their city.* This was not the only occasion in which the Son of God predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and the chastisement of the culpable.† The prophets, too, but notably, Daniel,‡ had long predicted the same. They showed how the blind obstinacy of the people would end in their ruin. But the heart of the multitude was bent upon evil; their minds were closed against the prophetic announcement, and of them it could be truly said that they had eyes and saw not; ears, and heard not. The death of the Son of God was the prelude to the calamities about to fall upon that once favored people of God. From that moment the entire nation seemed to have lost all power and control of its own acts, and to have rushed unthinkingly to its own destruction—a just retribution for its unpardonable crime of deicide. To that epoch, is to be referred the origin of those numerous bands of armed marauders that everywhere devastated the country, plundering and destroying whithersoever they directed their steps. To that period, also, is to be ascribed the formation of those factions and parties that sprang up in the capital and contested so bitterly the possession of the pontificate even to the extent of unlawfully and sacrilegiously usurping the divine functions and profaning the temple. Then it was that those ominous voices were heard to ema-

* Luke, chap. xxi, v. 5-24. † Luke, chap. xix., v. 43-44.

‡ "And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain: and the people that shall deny him, shall not be his. And a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war, the appointed desolation: and the desolation shall continue even to the consumation and to the end."—Daniel, chap. ix., v. 26-27.

nate from the holy of holies: "Let us depart, let us depart." This was all, but the last warning given to the people of the near approach of the divine vengeance. They were the voices of those guardians who for centuries had protected that temple of the Lord, but who now were about to withdraw and to abandon it to destruction, because of its being cursed by the Most High, on account of the crimes of the people. Previous to this, other alarming indications of the divine displeasure are said to have been witnessed, such as a fiery sword suspended over the doomed city, a preternatural light around the altar in the temple, and the appearance of armed troops and chariots of war rushing wildly through the clouds in the region above Jerusalem. In fine, the last warning was that communicated in the prophetic announcement of the son of Annanias, a common and ignorant man, who went about, crying aloud: "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against bridegrooms and brides, a voice against all people." The truth of this plaintive announcement was realized later on, when the city, besieged by her enemies, was beaten to the ground. But before recounting this, the reader's attention is invited to the coincidence between the name of this prophet and that of the Savior of the world. The prophetic warning of the son of Annanias, was the last offer made to the Jews to repent of their crimes. They had slain Jesus the Redeemer, and now a prophet, bearing the same adorable name, is sent to warn them of the anger of heaven, and the calamities that were about to befall them. But they were obstinate in their crimes, and, in consequence, the hand of God smote them with a terrible vengeance.

It was in the year 66 that the war was undertaken, which was to fulfill the Savior's prophecies regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. A com-

bination of circumstances helped to bring it about. Florus, the then Governor of Judea, a man in every way worthy of his imperial master, Nero, being a monster of cruelty, played the first rôle in this tragic scene. With a view of driving the people into revolt, that he might have an opportunity of enriching himself at the expense of their miseries, he exercised towards them the most reprehensible severity, and perpetrated upon them the most shameful atrocities. Several of their principal men he had arrested, scourged and crucified, on the pretense of imaginary crimes. It is thus heaven repaid in kind the crimes of which that people were guilty. In their inclination to revolt they were stimulated by the teachings and groundless assurances of their leaders. Mistaking the prophecies relating to the establishment of the spiritual dominion of the Son of God upon earth, and which was to begin with the preaching of the divine word by the Apostles, certain false prophets predicted the appearance at that time, of a powerful ruler, and the establishment of a kingdom which was to take the place of the dominions of their enemies. As in the rejection of the Redeemer, so also in this the people lent a ready assent to the teachings of their leaders, and the consequences of their credulity we shall presently see. Trusting to the assurances given, and urged on by the indignities offered, the people at length broke out into open revolt, possessed themselves of several fortresses occupied by the Romans, and banished or massacred the garrisons. Florus was obliged to fly from Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Romans, wherever sufficiently strong, retaliated in kind. Thus at Ptolemais and Ascalon, close on five thousand Jews were put to the sword, while at Cæsarea and Alexandria, eighty thousand in all perished, thirty at the former and fifty at the latter place. Treachery and bad faith were employed to carry out these ends. When for instance,

seige was laid to Scythopolis, the Jews of the place were requested to withdraw, on the assurance that no harm would be done them; but during the night their enemies going out, and finding them unarmed, slew them to the number of 13,000.

While the country was thus disturbed and in a condition approaching civil war, Gallus, governor of Syria, hastened to Jerusalem with an army of 13,000, and laid seige to the place. After a vigorous assault of five days, the city was on the point of being taken, when the commander, from some unaccountable cause, ordered a precipitate retreat and fled towards the shores of the Mediterranean with the loss of five thousand men, one standard and all his baggage. Intelligence of this signal defeat no sooner reached the Roman garrison at Damascus, than in retaliation for the reverses suffered by their kinsmen, they massacred in cold blood the Jewish inhabitants of the place, to the number of ten thousand.

The important victory gained at Jerusalem encouraged the people immensely and caused them to trust with greater confidence in the assertions of their prophets. A central plan of action was accordingly undertaken, by which it was sought to enlist the sympathies and services of every lover of his country. The whole of Judea was divided into six divisions or departments, each governed by a council, but all subject to the supreme council of Jerusalem. Arms were placed in the hands of all capable of bearing them, so that it may be literally said, the whole country was in arms. The cruel butchery of their brethren in Ptolemais and Ascalon, so fired the passions of the multitude as to make them determined to rid the country of the presence of their enemies at any and every cost. In this they were willingly aided by their kinsmen in Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and elsewhere. The eagle taken from the Romans was easily

construed into a favorable omen and regarded by most as a pledge of final success. Thus encouraged, armed and sustained, the entire Jewish people awaited the arrival of that army which it was certain would be despatched on news of the defeat reaching the ears of the emperor.

While Gallus was flying from Jerusalem, Nero was amusing himself in the theatres of Greece. Among those who had accompanied him thither, was one who by his ability had raised himself from the humblest position to that of general. Without friends, family influence or riches, Vespasian had successively filled the office of tribune, quæstor, edile and pretor. On him, as the fittest to meet the emergency, the eyes of the emperor were turned. A better selection, as proved by the result, could not have been made. Invested with his new command, Vespasian immediately despatched his son Titus to Alexandria, with instructions to take thence to Ptolemais the fifth Roman legion. As for himself he would proceed thither by land, with two others. At the place of rendezvous he was joined by the allied troops of Antiochus, Soberne, Agrippa and Maleck, their united numbers amounting all told to 60,000, 10,000 of whom were cavalry. Even with this formidable army, Vespasian did not proceed immediately to besiege the capital. A slower and more effectual method of conquering the enemy he was contented to follow. His object from the outset, was by breaking up the confederation, of which I have spoken, to isolate the capital from the aid of the provinces, and so necessitate it to capitulate from want of resources. His plan, though not the most brilliant, had yet the merit of being preëminently successful.

In the month of April of the year 67, the Roman general quitted his winter quarters at Ptolemais and directed his steps towards Gabara in Galilee. A feeble resistance no the

part of the inhabitants, and that place fell into the hands of Vespasian. It was immediately given to the flames and the inhabitants put to the sword. The object of this stern severity was more to strike terror into the hearts of the people and to show them the dangers of resistance, than as an act of retributive justice for the losses sustained under Gallus. It produced the result intended by its authors, and even another. It made the defenders of the country more hostile in their attitude and more desperate in their attempt at defense. One mile from Gabara, situated on a lofty eminence and securely defended by its natural position, was Jotapat. A much more difficult task was it for Vespasian to subjugate this than the former. Within, it was defended by 40,000 warriors, and without by lofty ramparts and abrupt declivities. Indeed only from one quarter was it at all accessible and not very readily even from that. So disadvantageous to the enemy was the location, that several days were consumed in getting the engines of war into position. Even then, owing to the bravery and artifice of the besieged, they were rendered largely ineffective, for, while the battering ram became powerless in consequence of the point of attack being protected by wool and straw, the toirtoise, by which the assailants were ordinarily enabled to advance, failed entirely of its object, in consequence of the boiling oil poured from the ramparts on the line of advance. In like manner, the burning torches and inflammable material hurled against the works of the Romans, produced such an effect by setting fire to the towers, the balista and scaffolding, as to render for the time the chances of victory exceedingly doubtful. After a continued siege, however of five and forty days a breach was eventually effected and then was witnessed one of those desperate and bloody contests of which history only occasionally speaks. As if to render the scene more tragic, the contest was carried on

under the shades of night. Torrents of blood ran on both sides. The love of country, of faith and fatherland, nerved the arms of the Jews, and the hope of plunder and licentious enjoyment those of the Romans. To the valor, discipline and hereditary pride of the latter, were opposed the hatred, fanaticism and nationality of the former. Bravely did each of the contending parties do their duty. The breach is at length occupied by the assailants; they have planted their standards on the walls; but it is only for a moment, for the next instant they are hurled from their position by the wild and desperate ardor of the besieged. Again they return, and again they are repulsed. The proud conquerors of the Gauls, of the Iberians and Britons have at length found a foe worthy of their prowess. Thus, from close of night to early dawn, did the well-matched contest rage, the cries and lamentations of the children and women, mingling with the oaths, the blasphemies and the imprecations of the men, and drowning in their volume the noise and clatter of the implements of war. At length the balance of victory inclines toward the besieged; Vespasian is compelled to retire; the Jews are victorious; Jotapat is saved! This was only momentary. The hand of divine providence was against that people, and whether by war or by want, it was in the counsels of the Lord that they should be humbled. A new and unexpected enemy, far more powerful than the Roman general with his 60,000 men, now appeared on the scene. That enemy was the want of water. The cisterns within the city were entirely exhausted: langour and lassitude seized upon all. The guards were no longer able to attend to their duty, but slept at their posts. A knowledge of the situation being communicated to Vespasian, he immediately ordered a renewal of hostilities and easily entered the city. The carnage was frightful. Forty thousand of the inhabitants were mercilessly slain, while

1,200 of all ages were reserved to grace the victors' triumph.*

During the general massacre which ensued on the entry of the Romans, several to save themselves from the rage of the enemy in whose mercy they could not reasonably hope, betook themselves to the caverns and cisterns within the walls. Amongst those who thus sought the preservation of their existence by concealment was the future historian of that period, with forty companions. Unfortunately, their retreat was discovered by the treachery of a woman. To Josephus a pardon was offered, on the condition of surrendering; but his companions would not permit it. Expecting no mercy at the hands of their conquerors, they preferred dying by their own hands, and resolved that a common destiny should be the fate of all. Then was enacted one of those touching episodes which rarely happen in the world. It was agreed that all should die, each in succession by the hands of his brethren, as the fatal lot fell upon him. Eight and thirty had thus perished, Josephus and a single companion being the only survivors. The future historian was averse from the beginning to the proceeding adopted by his companions, and used all his endeavors to prevent the final lot being drawn. He was successful; and then emerged from the bloody cave, reserved by divine providence for the high purpose of handing down to posterity a faithful account of that momentous period, Josephus and his companion. The strangeness of the situation and the unusual circumstances attending it, joined to the respect and admiration felt for the governor's character,† on account of his ability and bravery in defending the place, created a sense of commiseration for the captives. On the other hand, a part of the army, less relenting in their disposition and listening only to the promptings of vengeance, clamored loudly for

* Josephus, Wars, book iii., chap. vii. † Josephus was governor of the place.

their death. At the instance, however, of Titus, who was struck by the heroism and endowments of Josephus, the clamor was silenced and the captives reserved. Then it was, if we are to credit his own statement, that Josephus predicted the death of the emperor and the accession of Vespasian and his son Titus to the purple. When brought into the presence of the former, he thus addressed him: "Do you believe that you have in me an ordinary captive? If I were that, I had known how to die as became a leader and should not be here. I am commanded on the part of God to bear you a message: you desire to send me to Nero, but Nero will be dead by the time I arrive. Those also who are to succeed him will be dead. You, O Vespasian, are the emperor; after you, shall succeed your son, Titus. Place me now in irons if you desire, guard me as closely as you please, you are Cæsar, and, as such, can dispose not only of me but of the entire world at your pleasure. If you find that I deceive you and that I have resorted to this subterfuge merely on account of my situation, you may at your convenience have me handed over to punishment." Vespasian was naturally inclined to take in the situation; the prediction flattered his ambition; but he was puzzled to know what to think of it. "If you are really inspired," suggested one of the attendants, "how is it that you could not foresee the destruction of the city?" "I predicted it," answered Josephus, "and further that I should fall into your hands and that my life would be spared." A secret enquiry on the part of Vespasian elicited the fact that Josephus had indeed foretold the termination of the seige as he stated. His life was accordingly spared, though he was still treated as a captive, being retained in irons.

The fall of Jotapat virtually ended the war in Judea. From the very beginning there was very little doubt on which banner victory would ultimately rest. But after

the fall of that stronghold, it was clear to every dispassionate mind, that the Jews were unable to cope with the Romans. In succession there fell into the hands of Vespasian, Joppe, Zariche, Gamala, Tiberias and other places of minor importance. From Zariche upwards of thirty thousand of the inhabitants were sold into slavery, six hundred thousand were forwarded to Greece to assist in cutting the Isthmus of Corinth, while the old men and children to the number of 1,200, were got out of way by being barbarously butchered in the amphitheatre of Tiberias. The victories that the enemy obtained, and the severity with which he treated the captives in selling them into slavery, or in butchering them without mercy, created such a panic in the country as to drive thousands from their homes, and caused them to seek safety within the walls of Jerusalem. All, accordingly, who were animated by a spirit of patriotism, or influenced by a sense of personal danger, fell back upon the capital and awaited, in sullen determination, the approach of the enemy. The numbers that were thus congregated there, combined with the victory obtained over Gallus, was an assurance to many of their ultimate triumph. But in this, as in all other things, they were entirely mistaken. Their assembling in Jerusalem in such numbers, was for an entirely different purpose. In the order of divine providence, it was for defeat and not for triumph; it was to make more signal and heavy the punishment they had earned for themselves in rejecting and slaying the Son of God. To the reflective, even amongst themselves, the fate of the city could not be a matter of speculation. If it did not fall at the hands of the enemy, it was destined to perish at those of its unnatural children. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Two parties, one headed by a notorious chief of brigands, John of Gascola, who had been defeated by the Romans and obliged

to take refuge in the city, and the other led by Simon Ben Giorgas, aided by Anannias, the murderer of St. James, fiercely disputed the supreme power. Constant bloody contests took place between these in the streets of the doomed city. The former adding treachery to their lawlessness, opened the gates to the Idumeans, and thus becoming masters of the situation, massacred all who opposed them. It was, indeed, a reign of terror. The life-blood of thousands reddened the streets in every quarter, while the corpses, unburied, impeded the thoroughfares.

It was while matters were in this situation, that the Christians, remembering the prophetic words of the Savior, abandoned the city and retired to the little town of Pella: "For the day shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee around and straiten thee on every side And beat thee flat to the ground and thy children who are in thee. And they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."* The Christians were also urged to leave the city on account of the predictions of SS. Peter and Paul, who foretold, shortly before, the near approach of the judgment of God on the place. "Predicaverunt," says Lactantius, "ut post breve tempus immitteret Deus regem, qui expugnaret Judeos et civitates eorum solo adequaret, ipsos autem fame, sitique confectos obsideret."† It is to be regretted that the exact words of the Apostles were not preserved, for it would be gratifying to see how exactly they were fulfilled.

While the Christians, warned by Christ's prophetic utterance and the Apostles' warning, were hastening from the doomed city, the emperor Nero, met with his tragic death, and was followed in rapid succession by Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Meantime, Vespasian was successfully

* Luke, chap. xix, v. 43-44. † Vide Lactantius.

pursuing his conquests in Judea. He had already subjected all Idumea, and was in possession of the mountains to the west of Jerusalem, where he established his garrison. Jerusalem alone remained; but as the subjugation of this was by far the most formidable work of the entire campaign, as well on account of the number and zeal of the defenders as for its favorable position, he deferred making the attack till every precaution had been taken. With this object in view he returned to Ptolemais for the purpose of constructing the machinery necessary for the siege. Hardly had he arrived, when he was agreeably surprised by the general acclamations of "long live the emperor." Josephus' words were now accomplished, and his chains were accordingly removed by order of Vespasian.

The newly proclaimed emperor lost no time in hastening to Rome, leaving to his son, Titus, the conclusion of the war. The latter, at the head of four legions and detachments from two others, with a certain number of auxiliaries and the machinery requisite for the siege, set out for the capital. The city was already a prey to the worst of evils, for civil discord with all its attending consequences raged within the walls. The whole population was divided between three powerful aspirants to power, John of Gascola, Eleazar, and Simon Ben Giorgas. The partisans of these in their wild and wreckless endeavors to sustain the interests of their respective leaders, perpetrated the most enormous excesses. They wantonly burned or otherwise destroyed much of the provisions laid up for the siege, so that from the very beginning want began to be felt and even a scarcity of water. The siege commenced on the 11th of April A. D. 70, and lasted till the 1st of July, of the same year. During this comparatively limited period scenes exceeding in horror anything recorded in the annals of war, were of frequent occurrence. From the outset, the

more prudent were desirous of passing over to the enemy but were prevented by the chiefs of the factions who had every avenue leading from the city carefully guarded As an aggravation of the general misfortune, large numbers of pilgrims had arrived at the city for the celebration of the paschal solemnities. The entire number in Jerusalem at that moment, is estimated at between eight and twelve hundred thousand. Tacitus puts it at the former, and Josephus, at the latter, figure. No pen could adequately describe the sufferings of those unfortunates during the time the siege lasted. Josephus, than whom none could be better qualified to give an accurate description of them, speaks as follows: "The madness of the rioters increased with the famine. Provisions were nowhere to be had. Hence,they burst into houses to search for food, and if they found any, they would scourge the owners as if they intended to deny they had it; but if they found none, they tortured them as if they had carefully concealed it. The bodies of the poor wretches, however, were evidence enough whether they had or had not. Old men were beaten that held back their food and women were torn by the hair if they concealed what they had in their hands. Nor was there any pity for gray hairs or for infants; but taking up the infants clinging to the morsels, they dashed them to the ground. But they were much more cruel to those who anticipated their entrance and were devouring what they wished to seize, just as if they had been wronged by them. They also devised terrible modes of torture to discover where there was any food. For, by cruel devices to prevent every relief of nature, they caused the unhappy individual to suffer such torment, that the very recital makes one shudder at what he would endure before he confessed that he had one loaf of bread, or that he had a single handful of wheat concealed." The same author a little farther on continues this awful ac-

count in the following language: "With the hope of egress, was cut off all hope of safety to the Jews; and the famine now penetrating deeply was consuming the people by houses and families. The houses were filled with women and children that had thus perished; the by-ways with the dead bodies of old men. But the boys and the young men, swelling up, tottered and reeled like shadows through the market, and then falling down, lay wheresoever the malady had overtaken them. The sick were not even able to bury their dead and those yet in health and strength were loth to do it, both on account of the number of the dead and the uncertainty of their own lot. Some of them, therefore, that were yet sound in health, they supposed to have an abundance of food; but those that were wan and pallid, they passed by, for it seemed absurd to kill men that were soon likely to die from want. Many secretly exchanged their property for a single measure of wheat, if they happened to be the more wealthy; of barley, if they were of the poorer sort. Then locking themselves in the most retired part of their houses, some from excessive hunger eat the grain unprepared; others, however, baked, according as necessity or fear directed. As to a table there was none set anywhere; but taking the food from the fire they tore it asunder, yet crude and raw. Wretched, indeed, and lamentable was the sight, where the most powerful grasped after all, and the weaker were constrained to mourn. For famine surpasses all other evils; but it destroys nothing so effectually as shame; for that which would otherwise demand some regard is contemned in this. Thus, wives tore away the food from the very mouths of their husbands, children from their parents, and, what was most wretched of all, mothers from their infants; so that while their dearest children lay wasting in their arms, their was not shame enough to prevent them taking

away the very drops that supported life. And even in doing this they did not remain undiscovered; for whenever they saw a door locked this was a sign that those within were taking food and then immediately bursting open the door they rushed in. Many indeed fell down and died upon those they were burying; many went to the sepulchre even before they were overtaken by the struggles of death. There was, however, neither weeping nor lamentation, but the famine prevailed over all affection. With tearless eyes did they who were yet struggling with death, look on those that had gone to rest before them. A deep silence and deadly gloom also pervaded the city. But more oppression than all these, were the robbers that broke into the houses, now mere sepulchres, and spoiling the dead and tearing the garments off their bodies they went on with a laugh. They would also try the point of their swords in the dead bodies, and some of them that were lying yet alive they thrust through, in order to try the edge of their weapons. But those that prayed them the relief of their arm and sword, they contemptuously left to be destroyed by the famine, whilst those expiring died with their eyes fixed upon the temple and left the factious to survive them. Those, at first, not bearing the effluvia from the dead bodies, ordered them to be buried out of the public treasury: afterwards when they were not able to continue this they threw the bodies from the walls into the the ditches below. As Titus went around these and saw them filled with the dead and the deep gore flowing around the putrid bodies, he groaned heavily and raising his hands, called God to witness that it was none of his work." * The foregoing, though possibly partly rhetorical, yet gives us a fearful idea of the sufferings of the inhabitants. It is a picture of suffering

* Josephus, Antiquities.

unequalled in the history of the past. The writer continues to detail more of a similar kind and concludes by citing the instance of a mother slaying her own child and feasting off the remains.

The circumstances attending the commencement of the siege did not augur very favorably for the Romans: they were not as auspicious as had been anticipated. On the day of his arrival, while reconnoitering the position of the enemy, Titus had well nigh fallen into his hands. The following day, the safety of the tenth legion, which had been encamped on Mount Olivet, was placed in the most imminent danger. Being surprised by a large body of Jews it was on the point of giving way, when Titus at the head of a detachment hastened to its assistance and repulsed the assailants. This, however, in no way disconcerted the besieged. Neither this first defeat, nor the divisions that raged within the walls, nor the valor displayed by the Romans, made them at all anxious to accept terms of reconciliation. A fatal blindness, the chastisement of the Most High, hurried them on to their own destruction, caused them to reject every offer of accomodation, and to persevere in a course which eventually conducted them to their ultimate destiny. Some indeed fled secretly to the camp of the enemy and would have been followed by numbers of others, only for the precautions taken by the authorities in preventing them. For a time the people hoped against hope and bore up against their multitudinous misfortunes; but as the pangs of hunger increased and egress from the city became impossible, in their desperation they formed the resolution of falling upon the guards and thus extricating themselves from their horrible situation. But in this they were doomed to disappointment, for a knowledge of the conspiracy coming to the cognizance of the governing body, one and twenty of the leaders paid the

penalty of their attempt at escape by the sacrifice of their lives, while the conspirators in general were cast into prison.

On the 23rd of April a breach was made in the walls, but this did not put the besiegers in immediate possession of the city. It was an evidence, however, that the place was not likely to hold out very long. But even then the besieged might have saved themselves, if only guided by reason. Titus informed of the state of affairs within the walls offered them honorable terms. To obtain assent to his proposals he employed the kind offices of their kinsman, Josephus; but to every entreaty and argument they turned a deaf and unwilling ear, and determined to conquer or die. Titus, finding his offers of clemency scornfully rejected, resolved to make the besieged feel the weight of his power. His determination first found expression in this way. Some hundreds of unfortunates whom the pangs of the direst want had impelled beyond the limits of the Jewish lines in quest of some article of food in the shape of roots or herbs, happening to fall into the hands of the Romans, were by Titus' orders publicly crucified in view of their brethren on the ramparts. How significant this punishment! This instrument of torture which they prepared for the Son of God, they are now necessitated to embrace themselves. To strike even greater terror into the hearts of the besieged, the Romans proceeded to the still more horrible extreme of mutilating their victims by amputating their noses and ears and hands, which they forwarded as evidences of their severity to those within the walls. They did not even confine themselves to that. Their avarice carried them to a still more shocking extreme. The report being current that the Jews were accustomed to swallow their jewels with the view of preserving them, the Romans in the hope of obtaining these valuables seized upon and

embowelled numbers of these unfortunates, searching diligently in their entrails for the pearls they were suspected of concealing. Thus, in a single night, two thousand unhappy victims met this deplorable fate: they were slain and embowelled, their murderers greedily tearing asunder their still warm entrails, in the fruitless attempt at finding a treasure! To the honor of the Roman commander it must be acknowledged that he was not responsible for the act. He had no share in so horrible and barbarous a proceeding: he would even have punished the guilty, but finding so many of his troops concerned in the affair he was reluctantly necessitated to confine himself merely to a reproval of the crime.

Nearly two months had now elapsed since the besieging army appeared before the walls. Every effort had been made in the interim to hasten the capture of the place, but its favorable position, its admirable defenses, the number and determination of the inhabitants, rendered its fall necessarily slow. The time, however, had arrived when a powerful assault was to be made. Every thing was in readiness to take the city by storm. The battering rams and other implements of war were each in its place. Meantime the besieged were not idle on their part. A mine conducted from within to the spot where the enemy's camp was planted, being fired at the critical moment, seriously damaged and disconcerted the plans of the Romans. This was followed by a sortie from the city, which placed for the moment the affairs of the besieged in a very critical condition. But it was only momentary. In the decrees of divine providence it was destined that the city should fall The partial defeat sustained by the Romans, and especially the damage done to the engines of war, made the affair of taking the city by assault a work of considerable difficulty. It was, accordingly, determined to draw a ram-

part around it and to starve the inhabitants into submission. Then were fulfilled the prophetic words of the Redeemer: "And when He drew near seeing the city he wept over it saying: If thou also hadst known and that in this thy day the things that are to thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee and *thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round* and straiten thee on every side. And beat thee flat to the ground and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." *

Such was the ardor of the troops to execute the commands of their general, that within three days, a trench thirty stadii long, was drawn around the doomed city. Thirteen redoubts occupied by detachments prevented all egress. To cut off the more effectually every possible resource, Titus had the underground passages leading from the city to the suburbs closed. It was then that the condition of the inhabitants assumed its most horrible proportions, and such were the consequences of the situation, that the dead were abandoned and suffered to rot, and infect the locality wherever they lay. At first an attempt had been made to remove them from the thoroughfares and at least to save the community from the infection. They were accordingly thrown from the ramparts, but the numbers increasing and the alarm becoming general, even this miserable tribute was denied them. The consequence was that the dead and the dying were to be encountered in every street and lane, on the platforms, in the dwellings, on the ramparts and even in the temple. In fact Jerusalem was a common sepulchre, but a sepulchre of an unusual kind in which the living were mingled with the dead.

On the twelfth of July, the prophecy of Daniel regard-

* Luke, chap. xix, v, 41–44.

ing the cessation of the perpetual sacrifice for want of a victim took place: "And he instructed me and spoke to me and said: O Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee and that thou mightest understand. . . . And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain; and the people that shall deny him shall not be his. . . . and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail; and there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end."* Nothing could have happened more discouraging to the Jews than the cessation of the daily oblation in the temple. With the disappearance of the lamb of propitiation from the altar of Jehovah, departed, in the judgment of the more reflective, the divine protection of heaven. Indeed so keenly did they feel this misfortune that, forgetting for the moment their other numerous and grave misfortunes, they bewailed this as their only evil, and raising their eyes and hands to heaven they burst forth into loud and piteous lamentations which moved even the hearts of their enemies. Taking advantage of their then humbled condition, Titus once more appealed to their judgment and offered them honorable terms of peace. He even promised to furnish victims for the sacrifice, but to all his proposals there were returned only reproaches and maledictions. Indignant, at such folly and obstinacy in protracting a struggle which must in the end prove more disastrous to the besieged, Josephus, whose kind offices Titus had engaged on this as on former occasions, broke out in these reproachful and prophetic words: "Jehovah is no longer with you: it is he who is with the Romans, and he will give up the temple and the city to the flames." These animated words had no further effect on the leaders of the besieged than his former entreaties; they only rendered

* Daniel, chap. ix, v, 22-27.

them the more obstinate and determined in their resolve of never submitting. Nothing accordingly remained for the Romans but to subject them by force. Their weakened condition at that juncture, in consequence of the numbers they had lost by the plague and the famine, joined to the effects produced by a scarcity of all the necessaries of life, gave Titus the hope that the place might be taken by assault. It was the common opinion, however, of the most experienced of his counsellors, that considering the natural and artificial advantages of the city, a successful capture by assault could not be so readily trusted, and that the most effectual and speedy way of terminating the war was by setting the city on fire. This was distasteful to Titus as he earnestly desired the preservation of the temple, and in a measure regarded the idea of burning it as sacrilegious. But his intentions were not in accord with the divine appointment of heaven. It had been decreed that the temple should be destroyed; the Savior had foretold it, and the event proved the fulfillment of these divine utterances. In the general assault ordered by Titus, the doors of the temple and a part of the building were destroyed, but the building itself, in all its principal parts still remained. The time had not yet arrived when the prophetic announcements regarding its destruction were to be realized. On the following day, the fourth of August, a day ever memorable in the annals of Jewish history, a torch cast accidentally, it is said, by one of the soldiers, set the whole building on fire, and utterly demolished it. Thus perished by the crimes of the people the grandest temple that the world had ever beheld, eleven hundred and thirty years after its foundation had been laid by king Solomon. The destruction of the temple virtually put an end to the war. Mount Moria still held out and offered a feeble and ineffectual resistance; but this was only for a very limited time. The carnage

that followed the capture of these two strongholds, was frightful in the extreme. "The bodies," writes Josephus, "heaped up in the great court of the temple, rose to the level of the altar. The pavement of the porticos disappeared under a sewer of blood. The cries of the dying, mingling with the vociferations of the conquerors, were such that the echo reverberated on the banks of the Jordan, thirty kilometres distant. Priests, old men, women and infants, were all alike put to death. Six thousand persons jammed together under the portico of Solomon, were still alive. . . . The conquerors set fire to the gallery and burned them alive." * According to the same author, there perished during the siege the immense number of one million one hundred persons, while ninety thousand were taken prisoners and sold into slavery, or made to grace the triumph of the conqueror on his return to Rome. Thus was punished, in the most terrible and signal manner, the Jewish people, for their crime in rejecting and slaying the Redeemer of the world.

* Vide Antiquities,

CHAPTER XI.

NERO'S PUNISHMENT—TRANQUILLITY ENJOYED BY THE CHRISTIANS—PARTIAL PERSECUTION—ACCESSION OF DOMITIAN—HIS CRUELTIES—THE ALLEGED GROUNDS ON WHICH THE CHRISTIANS WERE PERSECUTED—PUNISHMENT OF DOMITIAN—NERO'S REIGN—ACCESSION OF TRAJAN—PLINY'S LETTER TO TRAJAN—THE EMPEROR'S ANSWER—CESSATION OF THE PERSECUTION.

While the Jews were being punished in Judea for their crimes against the Redeemer, the instrument in the hands of God for their chastisement was earning for himself a like retribution. Nero, the first of the Roman emperors to persecute the Christian religion, experienced in his tragic end the consequences of his impious efforts. His fall and punishment were as signal as his crimes were notorious and flagrant. On arriving in Naples, whither he had gone for the purpose of engaging in the role of a comedian, he learned, for the first time, of the revolt of the Gauls under Vindex. This was quickly followed by the still more alarming intelligence of the defection of the Iberian province and the proclamation of Galba as emperor. Conscious of his own universal unpopularity and the impossibility of opposing so powerful a rival, Nero allowed himself to become alternately a prey to the most insensate and atrocious designs. At first conceiving the idea of removing to the east and proclaiming himself king of the Orient, he thus contemplated securing a share of that power which was rapidly passing from his grasp. But when the time was at hand for carrying this into effect, he found to his chagrin that the most trusted of his followers were unwill-

ing to accompany him. It was then, according to report, that he formed the resolution of putting privately to death the governors of the provinces and the generals of the army —an atrocity which was to be supplemented by the additional crime of the slaughter of the Gallic families then in Rome, the wholesale poisoning of the senate, the burning of the city, and the destruction by wild beasts, to be let loose, of the people at large. Fear alone prevented him from accomplishing this horrible project.

Deserted by all, even his most familiar and intimate friends, in a fit of despair the unhappy emperor resolved upon taking his own life. But the hand that had signed the death warrant of so many virtuous Christians had not the strength necessary to plunge the fatal dagger into his own bosom, and he was necessitated to summon to his presence for that purpose a gladiator from the arena. But even this poor consolation was denied him. Then did he give utterance to those pathetic and well-known words: "There is not left to me either a friend or a foe." In this juncture he was prevailed upon by a freedman named Phaon to fly the city and secrete himself in the country. Despised, detested and hated by his people, Nero accompanied by only four attendants hastened a fugitive from that palace where only a week before he had ruled as the greatest monarch of the world, and the greatest enemy of the Christian name. Such is the uncertainty of human affairs and of the ways of divine providence! Meantime he could hear from his place of concealment the tumult in the city and the joyful acclamations of the people in honor of his down-fall. Still greater was his affliction when it was announced to him that the senate had declared him a common enemy and ordered him to be punished according to the rigor of the ancient laws. Being informed that the meaning of this was that his head being placed in a fork should be

battered to pieces, the wretched fallen monarch, overcome by the weight of his misfortunes but not having courage to deprive himself of existence, suppliantly begged of the bystanders to give him an example by dying in his presence. To this they unanimously demurred and left him to battle with shame and fear. But there was no time for delay, for the next moment the tramp of the cavalry sent in his pursuit struck upon his ear. The supreme moment had come; he must either fall by his own hand or by that of the enemy. With trembling grasp and feeble effort he pressed the point of his dagger against his throat, but there was not power sufficient to cause it to enter. It required the aid of his secretary, Epaphroditus, to make the fatal weapon do its work. Thus died, A. D. 68, hated and detested by all, a fugitive from his home and a declared enemy of the commonwealth, Nero, the greatest enemy of the Christian religion up to that date.

From the death of Nero, till the accession of Trajan a generation elapsed. In the interim the purple was worn successively by five emperors, an evidence of the disturbed state of the empire at that period. To this more than to any natural clemency on the part of the rulers, is to be attributed the partial freedom enjoyed by the Christians from persecution at this stage of their history. The sword was, however, still over their heads; the ephemeral tranquillity they enjoyed, such as it was, was only the calm which preceded the storm. Vespasian succeeded to the empire on the death of Galba, A. D. 69. Though universally regarded in connection with the temporal interests of the state as amongst the best of the occupants of the imperial throne, his name has still been dishonored and his memory tarnished by his being amongst the number of the persecutors of the Christian religion. It is true he did not frame any laws, at least there is no evidence that he did, against the reli-

gion; nor was this at all necessary, for the old ones, still extant, required only to be enforced in order that the Christians should suffer. That in reality they did, is evidenced by the following inscription discovered in the Catacombs on the tomb of Gaudentius: "It is from Christ that thou hast althings and thou dost put to death Gaudentius. It is thus, O cruel Vespasian, that thou showest thy gratitude."* There was not indeed any general persecution during this reign; but by virtue of the existing constitutional laws forbidding the worship of any but the deities recognized by the senate, the Christians suffered whenever complaints were lodged against them and that the judges had to adjudicate in their instance. This will fully explain the inscription adduced without referring it to a general persecution.

On the death of Titus, who succeeded his father Vespasion, and whose reign was exceedingly clement, his brother Domitian ascended the imperial throne. This prince, who has been justly regarded as a second Nero, exceeded if possible, that monster in cruelty. The character given of him even by pagan writers, is of the most unfavorable kind. He assisted in person at the processes and tortures of the Christians. Though the fiercest and most implacable of monsters, he was personally the most effeminate and least capable of suffering. Rarely did he appear in public, except in a litter or carriage, and whenever he had occasion to travel by water, he could hardly endure the noise of the oars. Yet this was the man, so averse to inconvenience and suffering, himself, who witnessed, with the keenest delight, the tortures and agonies of the Christians. The precise date of this emperor's persecution is unknown. St. Jerome, in his lives of illustrious men, places it in the year 95, but Baronius fixes it at 91. It is possible that the persecution did not burst forth in all its fury, till

* Roma Soterrana, l. iii, chap. xxii: apud Belouino, vol. i, p. 150.

the former date, but in the case of one who exhibited such ferocity against the Christians, it is hard to believe that fifteen years * were suffered to elapse before any victims were made. Be that however as it may, it is certain that it was not before the year 95 he published his edicts with the view of destroying the Christian religion. At first he confined himself to imposing exorbitant taxes on the faithful, but this not proving sufficient for his purpose, he eventually unsheathed the sword. How far even at the outset he carried the spirit of hostility, may be gathered from the words of Eusebius: "Domitian, indeed, having exercised his cruelty against many, and slain no small number of noble and illustrious men at Rome, and having without cause punished vast numbers of honorable men with exile and confiscation of their property, at length established himself as the successor of Nero in his hatred and hostility to God."†

The ostensible grounds on which the Christians were punished were their refusal to conform to the laws of the realm. Because of their unwillingness to worship the pagan divinities, they were accused of atheism and punished accordingly. Their refusal too, to offer sacrifice to the emperor, who had recently proclaimed himself divine, was also among the crimes laid to their charge.‡ At first they were not proceeded against, otherwise than by impost and legal disabilities; but as the contest continued, and the emperor became more enraged, death was their penalty. Amongst the first to feel the effects of the emperor's displeasure was the consul, Flavius Clemens, his cousin-german. His death was followed by that of a large number of others, the crime laid to their charge being, according to Dion, atheism or an adoption of the

* Domitian came to the throne, A. D. 81.

† Eusebius, book iii. chap. xvii.

‡ Belouino, vol, 1, p. 155.

manners of the Jews, as conversion to Christianity was then styled by the pagan writers. The most remarkable to suffer for the faith in this reign were the evangelists, SS. Mark and John. The former received the crown of martyrdom at Autin, a town of Latium, and the latter, though miraculously preserved, has even been regarded by the Church as a martyr.

Domitian was urged on in his persecution of the Christians as well by political as religious considerations. He had heard of the vague traditions respecting the descendants of David possessing the world, and like Herod was determined to guard himself against a possible rival who might dispute with him the possession of the empire. Accordingly he ordered the martyrdom of the grandchildren of Judas, the only living descendants that could create anxiety in his breast on the ground of lineage. "There were yet living," says Hegesippus, "of the family of our Lord, the grandchildren of Judas, called the brother of our Lord according to the flesh. These were reported as being of the family of David and were brought to Domitian by the evocatus. For this emperor was as much alarmed at the appearance of Christ, as Herod. He put the question whether they were of David's race, and they confessed that they were. He then asked them what property they had or how much money they owned. And both of them answered that they had between them only nine thousand denarii, and this they had not in silver but in the value of a piece of land containing only thirty nine acres, from which they raised their taxes and supported themselves by their own labor. Then they also began to show their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies and the callosity formed by incessant labor. When asked, also, respecting Christ and his kingdom, what was its nature and when and where it was to appear, they replied that it was

not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom but celestial and angelic; that it would appear at the end of the world when, coming in glory he would judge the quick and the dead and give to every, one according to his works. Upon which Domitian, despising them, made no reply, but treating them with contempt as simpletons commanded them to be dismissed and by a decree ordered the persecution to cease."* The exiles were then, according to Tertullian, at liberty to return, amongst whom was St. John.† But it was not till after the death of Domitian that the evangelist quitted the island of Patmos whither he had been exiled.

What filled up the measure of Domitian's impiety was the death of Flavius Clemens. This so exasperated the senate that for their own safety they resolved upon his destruction. They continued however to flatter his vanity and decreed him imperial honors, ordering that whenever he occupied himself with the offices of his station the Roman knights should march before him lance in hand. But this the tyrant dispensed with, knowing the sentiments that prompted it and fearing the danger that it concealed. It is not, indeed, figuratively but literally true, that Domitian lived in the midst of danger and in incessant fear. His cruelties he knew had created for him enemies in every quarter and his fears were not slow in magnifying and multiplying the dangers that constantly threatened him. To such an extent did his fears carry him that he had the portico of his palace lined with pellucid marble from the quarries of Cappadocia, whereby he might when taking his promenade be apprised of the approach of an assassin. Not content with this, he eventually grew so exceedingly timorous and distrustful that he refused admittance to any

* Hegesippus Apud Eusebium, book 3, chap. 20.

† Vide Eusebium, book iii. chap. 23.

except his most trusted attendants. But in vain did he attempt to secure himself by such measures. The shaft of divine vengeance was able to reach him wherever he retired and however secured. It was God that he had aroused to anger, and against Him had he to contend. "Within those walls," says Pliny, "behind which he thought himself in safety he had shut up with himself treason, ambush and an avenging God. The punishment due to his offenses set aside guards, forced barriers and let the light of day in on narrow and carefully guarded passages as if they had been open ways."

According to the pagan writers, Dion and Suetonius, Domitian had been miraculously forewarned of his death. Certain marvelous occurrences happening at the time pointed, they say, to this. Whether any faith should be given to these statements it would be difficult to say. But it is certain that the continued fear in which he existed made him prepared for his end at any moment. The immediate cause of his death was as follows. A courtesan named Domitia having fallen into disgrace, and learning that her name with those of several others of rank and influence, was on the list of the condemned, entered into a conspiracy with some of the proscribed to forestall the emperor in his bloody intent. Accordingly on the 18th of September while Domitian was preparing for dinner, his chamberlain, Parthenius, detained him for a moment on the plea of revealing a conspiracy, introducing at the same time an attendant who presented a document purporting to give an account of the plot. While the emperor was intently perusing it the stranger seizing his opportunity plunged a dagger into his belly and mortally wounded him. Domitian's cries drew the guards immediately to his assistance; but it was too late, the fatal blow had been given, he was beyond the hope of recovery. God had stricken

him as the enemy of the Christian faith. Such was the fate of the second great persecutor of the religion of the Redeemer, among the Roman emperors.

Domitian was succeeded, on the imperial throne, by Nerva, a mild, humane prince. One of the first acts of the new emperor was an edict prohibiting the Christians being punished on account of their faith, and permitting the banished to return to their homes. In consequence of this clemency, St. John returned from Patmos and became bishop of Ephesus. Two years later, Nerva left the purple to Trajan, his colleague in the empire. Though commonly regarded as a wise and enlightened prince, Trajan stained his memory by his acts of cruelty against the Christians. He did not, indeed, publish any edicts against the religion, but he was guilty of almost as bad; for he prohibited nocturnal assemblies, thereby taking away from the faithful the only privilege they enjoyed of worshipping in secret, while at the same time it put it in the power of the authorities to torment them the more. That a vast number suffered in consequence of these prohibitive laws, is most evident from the testimony of Eusebius as well as the following correspondence between the governor of Pontus and Bithynia and the emperor. In the year 103, Pliny the younger was appointed to this position with the title of pro-pretor with consular power. On arriving in the country he found the religion of the state almost wholly abandoned. The temples were deserted, the sacrifices unobserved, and the victims without purchasers. In the emergency, to restrain the people from wholly giving up the faith of their ancestors, he commenced by putting in force against the professors of Christianity, the prohibitive laws of the realm, as well those framed by Nero as by Domitian. But to so little effect did this severity work in checking what he regarded as an evil that, from mere inability to destroy

the numbers accused he was necessitated to desist and in his perplexity addressed the following communication to his imperial master: "It is my constant practise to consult your majesty on all my doubts. For who can better than you resolve my doubts or supply my defective lights. I have never been instructed in the judgment to be given where Christianity is the crime. And hence, I am ignorant of what ought to be punished in this matter or how far the rigor of the law ought to extend. I have been accordingly not a little embarrassed to decide in such cases, whether for instance a difference should be made on account of the age or whether those of tender years should be treated as persons of maturer age; whether repentance should merit pardon, or whether those who have been Christians should not be rewarded on ceasing to be such. Is the name alone to be punished even when there is no crime or in cases where crimes accompany the name? The following is the course which I have adopted provisionally regarding those who have been brought before me as Christians. On their avowal I have interrogated them two and three times, threatening them with death in case they persisted. In cases where they have done so, I have punished them accordingly. For without examining whether what they avowed was criminal I had not the smallest doubt that at least their obstinacy and headstrongness merited punishment. Amongst those whom this religious frenzy has carried to this excess, are certain Roman citizens whom I have separated from the others, with the view of sending them to Rome. The attention bestowed on this affair has multiplied the number, as usually happens, and I am constantly called upon to decide in the matter. I have presented to me an anonymous list, comprising a great number of names. But those thus presented to me have denied that they were ever Christians; and in effect they have

repeated after me the formulary of the prayers which we address to the gods. They have offered incense and wine to your image, which I had expressly carried with the statue of the god: in fine, they have cursed him whom they call Christ. On these grounds I have thought it my duty to discharge the accused, for I am assured that those who are truly Christians cannot be got to do anything at all like this. There are others who at first acknowledged they were Christians, but afterwards denied it; others again who have been known to be such formerly, but who have declared that they have ceased to be such for a long time—some for three and some for twenty years. All have adored your image, and have cursed Christ. Furthermore, they protested that their only mistake and error consisted in assembling, on an appointed day, before the rising of the sun, in order to adore Christ as God, and in singing hymns in his honor, and pledging themselves not to commit any crime, neither theft, nor robbery, nor adultery, never to be false to their word, nor to retain what was entrusted to them by others. After this they retired, and used to reassemble to partake of a plain and harmless food. They added that they even abstained from those practises since the publication of the edict, by which, conformable to your orders, I have prohibited these assemblies. In order to assure myself fully of the truth of these assertions, I had two female slaves questioned, and I have not discovered any other crime except one full of folly. For these reasons I have suspended my searches, and have undertaken to consult you, the more as the number of those who are comprised is very great and embraces persons of all ages, sex and condition. For not only the cities are infected with this superstition, but the towns and the country also. The evil is still not without remedy. Already I see the temples which were deserted, repeopled; the solemn sacri-

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fices long since interrupted, resume their former splendor. There was not at one time purchasers for the victims; to-day they are sold in numbers. Hence, it is easy to see what a multitude of persons may be reclaimed if only the doors of repentance be opened to them."

There is much in the foregoing that merits the serious attention of the reader. It is generally regarded as the most creditable testimony to the Christians of that period, and is usually employed to illustrate the purity of their lives and the genuineness of their religious belief. The writer, it is true, asserts that the veritable Christian would offer no adoration to the idols; but this was upon heresay, and the same might be said of the genuine faithful under every circumstance, and in every age. Granting all that might be legitimately claimed for the passages, as honorable to the cause of the faithful, it is yet seriously damaged and blurred by the assertion, that several readily apostatized and blasphemed the Redeemer. What is there especially creditable to the believers of that period, in the facts, if facts they be, that those who, before the arrival of the pretor, proclaimed themselves Christians, on being summoned before his tribunal and threatened with death, acknowledged themselves pagans, so that the temples once abandoned, were again, by Pliny's exertions, crowded with worshippers? "I see the temples which were deserted, repeopled; the solemn sacrifices long since interrupted, resume their former splendor. There was not at one time, purchasers for the victims, to-day they are sold in numbers. Hence, it is easy to see what a multitude of persons may be reclaimed if only the doors of repentance be opened to them."

What is especially noteworthy in the epistle, then, is not the very remarkable virtue of the Christians or their extraordinary merits; but rather the spirit with which paganism

confronted the new faith. Unable to detect any crime in the professors of Christianity, they still regarded them as worthy of blame, and upon the avowal of belonging to the religion deemed them deserving of punishment. The governor in doubt, whether the name alone were not deserving of punishment, requests to be enlightened thereon. As a faithful servant of the law and a political ruler, having the worldly interests of his master at stake, the letter of Pliny may be regarded as creditable and worthy of one occupying so exalted a position; but as the expression of a philosopher, and a judge it must ever be regarded as most condemnatory of his memory. His course was only a reiteration of the conduct of Pilate. "I find no cause in the man," said the governor of Judea, and yet he had the Son of God put to the torture. "Upon the avowal," says the governor of Bithynia, "I have reiterated the question and when they persisted I sent them to punishment." The emperor's proceeding was equally disingenuous and unworthy of an impartial ruler. In answer to the query what was to be done with the Christians, he answered as follows: "You have acted as you should, my dear Pliny, in the cases, for it is impossible to establish a general law or form that would be applicable to every case: you must not seek to discover the Christians; but if they are brought before your tribunal and convicted you must punish them—with this restriction, however, that whoever denies being a Christian and proves his declaration by adoring the gods, even though he be suspected, still his repentance should obtain for him pardon. As regards anonymous communications, you must not pay any attention to them. It is very dangerous and not suited to the times.—TRAJAN."

The immediate consequence of this communication was the cessation in a great measure of the persecution. The Christians were no longer officially sought after, but it

was still in the power of all to accuse them and have them convicted—an opportunity that was not allowed to escape by the malevolent and revengeful.* Even Trajan did not always adhere very rigidly to the advice he gave to his friends, for, when in Antioch, in the year 107, on his way to do battle against Chosroe, he commanded the Christian inhabitants to worship the idols, a refusal to comply with his orders being followed by a bitter persecution. Ignatius, whose admirable letter to the Romans, ranks next to the writings of the evangelists, was then bishop of Antioch and metropolitan of Syria. He was one of the few privileged ones then living who had been consecrated by the Apostle. Against him the emperor's anger was especially directed, and in the interrogatory to which he was subjected, nothing could be more dignified and worthy of a kind ruler of the Church than his conduct on the occasion, while that of the emperor was equally the reverse. "Who art thou impure spirit, wicked demon," said the emperor, "that durst violate my orders, and inspire others with their contempt?" "Thou art the first, O prince, that hast called Theophoros an injurious name. Far from the servants of the true God being wicked demons, understand that these latter tremble and fly at the voice of God's servants. If, nevertheless, you think that I merit so odious a name for having been so formidable to your demons, I shall glory in bearing it. For I have received from Christ my master, power to oppose all their designs and to save myself from their ambushes." "And who is this Theophoros?" demanded the emperor. "It is I," replied Ignatius, "and whoever like me carries Jesus Christ in his heart." "Dost it seem to thee, then," continued Trajan, "that we have not also in our hearts the gods who combat for us?" "Gods;" resumed Ignatius," you deceive yourselves, they

* Eusebius, book iii., chap. 33.

are but demons. There is but one God, who made heaven and earth, and all things. And there is but one Jesus Christ the only Son of God, and there is but one great King whose graces alone can render me happy." "Whom dost thou thus name: is it that Jesus, that Pilate attached to a cross?" "Say rather," added the Saint, "that Jesus himself attached to the cross sin and its author, and that he gave to his disciples the power of overcoming the malice of hell." "Dost thou bear Christ within thee," interrupted Trajan. "Yes, without doubt," said Ignatius, "for it is written: 'I shall dwell within them and shall accompany their steps,'"*

Angered still more by these calm and dignified replies, in every way worthy of a great servant of God, the emperor ordered the conference ended, and pronounced the saint's sentence as follows: "We order that Ignatius, who glories in carrying within him the crucified, shall be conducted to great Rome, in order to be exposed to the beasts, and to serve as a spectacle to the people." How did that venerable man receive this death-warrant? Did he tremble and show signs of fear? Far from it. Finding himself placed in irons, he raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed: "I thank thee O Lord that thou hast given me a perfect love of thee, and hast honored me with chains, as thou didst the great apostle Paul." His only solicitude then was for the flock of Christ, and to prevent the faithful from attempting anything that might prevent him obtaining the glorious crown of martyrdom. To this end he addressed to them the letter alluded to above. He suffered on the 20th of December A. D. 107. How many suffered at this period, it would be impossible to affirm, but that the numbers were considerable is generally credited.

Up to this period the reign of Trajan had been remarkably successful. He had covered himself and the nation

* 2 Cor., chap. vi.

with glory: all his military exploits had been brought to most successful terminations. But from the very moment his hand was raised against the servants of God, the star of his glory began to descend. He began to be shorn of his power; province after province slipped from his grasp; people after people revolted against his authority; until in the end, he whose life had been spent in seeking and acquiring renown had nothing remaining but a legacy of shame and a shadow of authority.

As it was at Antioch he began to persecute the faithful, so it was there that the displeasure of heaven was first visibly manifested against him. He had not yet left that city on his road of conquest, when the place was visited by a frightful earthquake accompanied by thunder and lightning, whereby the greater part of the dwellings were overturned and destroyed. The emperor, with difficulty, saved himself by leaping through a window. This was A. D. 115. Two years later another affliction awaited him. Those splendid conquests which he had gained, and of which he was so proud, began one by one to be lost to him. He was still in the Orient, sacrificing at Babylon to the memory of Alexander, when news was brought to him of the destruction of the army he had left in Arabia. This was followed by the announcement of the revolt of the Parthians, the Armenians and the Mesopotamians, all recently subdued, and the conquest of whose dominions, had contributed so much to his fame. To add further to these numerous misfortunes, at the very moment he was maturing his plans for the recovery of these provinces, he was stricken by the Lord and partially paralyzed. Thus rendered inactive he found himself necessitated to return to Rome, shorn of his power, stripped of his glory, and "compelled to associate with himself in the empire one of whose incapacity he was persuaded, and whom he regarded as an enemy."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHRISTIANS PARTIALLY PERSECUTED UNDER ADRIAN—HOW THE EXCESSES OF THE SECTARIES AWAKENED HOSTILITIES AGAINST THEM—ADRIAN BECOMES ENRAGED—APOLOGIES OF QUADRATUS AND ARISTIDES—EDICTS OF TOLERATION IN FAVOR OF THE CHRISTIANS—ADRIAN IS SUCCEEDED BY HIS SON ANTONINUS—THIS EMPEROR'S ORDINANCE—PARTIAL LIBERTY OBTAINED IN CONSEQUENCE BY THE CHRISTIANS—THE PHILOSOPHERS JUSTIN, TATIAN, HERMES AND TERTULLIAN COMBAT THE ERRORS OF THE PAGANS—RAGE OF THE PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS—THEY URGE THE EMPEROR TO PERSECUTE—POLYCARP'S MARTYRDOM.

The deeds of blood and violence inaugurated against the Christians by Nero, and continued under Domitian and Trajan, were not wholly abandoned by Adrian. This prince, though not generally ranked amongst the persecutors of the Church, was yet a formidable enemy of the Christian faith. As much blood, indeed, did not flow in his reign as during that of Nero and Domitian; still numbers were martyred, and died nobly in defense of the faith, under the rule of this emperor. It may even be affirmed that the Christians were violently persecuted at this period. What contributed much to incense against them the pagan authorities, were the calumnious charges laid to their account and of which there appeared to be a semblance of truth in the shocking depravities of the heretical sects of that time. Confounding the members of the true faith with the spurious Christian sectaries, the Gnostics, the Carpocratians, the Adamites and others, the former were made to bear the burden and answer for the enormities of the latter. Another cause for the revival of the old, intolerant, anti-Christian spirit, were the atrocities perpetrated during the late

war in the Orient by the Jews, with whom the Christians were partly confounded in the pagán mind. But the direct and immediate cause was the counsel of the demon.

The emperor Adrian, having erected a sumptuous palace on the banks of the Tiber, desired before inhabiting it to have it consecrated, according to pagan rite and custom. To this end he offered the customary sacrifices, at the completion of which he petitioned to be informed by the tutelary deities, how long that abode should exist. To his demand the following response was returned: "We cannot, O prince, satisfy your curiosity, till you repair the insult offered to us by a Christian widow in invoking her God in our presence. She is named Symphrorosa and is the mother of seven children. Make her offer incense and we will answer your demand." Indignant that any affront should be offered to the gods, Adrian ordered the holy widow and her family to be immediately brought into his presence. At first adopting a mild and conciliatory manner he sought to obtain from Symphrorosa an acknowledgment of the claims of the pagan divinities. But to his every effort she returned a firm and positive refusal, and finally addressed him in these words: "Your Majesty, I had for a husband and brother-in-law, two officers of your army: both had the honor of being tribunes. They gave their lives for Jesus Christ, and they preferred to endure a thousand torments rather than burn a single grain of incense before the demons you adore. If their end has been dishonorable before men, it has been honorable before the angels; they are now crowned with immortal glory, they dwell in heaven, and following the immortal King that reigneth there they march covered with glory amid the trophies which they have achieved in dying for him."

Enraged at so firm and dignified an answer, Adrian cried out in a paroxysm of fury: "Sacrifice, or I will sacri-

fice you and yours to the gods whom you despise." "Your gods," replied the noble woman, "cannot receive me in sacrifice; I am not a victim for them. But if you order me to be burned for the name of Jesus Christ, understand that the fire which shall consume me will only augment the demons' punishment." "Sacrifice or die," again cried out the emperor. "You think you can terrify me," responded Symphrorosa: "by no means. Your menaces cannot change my sentiments. I shall never be soon enough reunited with my spouse; you have put him to death for having confessed Jesus Christ. Don't waste your time, then. I also am ready to die: I adore the same God." She was then ordered to be smitten on the face and to be suspended by the hair of the head; but this was subsequently revoked, and she was cast into the Tiber, and thus ended her life by a glorious martyrdom. On the following day her seven children followed her to the kingdom of heaven—being martyred by order of the tyrant, but each in a different manner.*

The blood of these noble martyrs being thus shed at the instigation of the powers of darkness, it is not to be wondered at that the spirit of persecution and of bloodshed should have continued. But Adrian was not as bloodthirsty and cruel as Nero, nor had he the same ferocious and ungovernable instincts as Galerius. If he persecuted, it was because he deemed it a duty, because he could not brook an offense to his imaginary deities. Once convinced of the injustice of his course, he was ready to sheath the sword and to revoke his decrees. To the ability of two illustrious apologists, Quadratus and Aristides, this happy alteration in his counsels was due. The former, who was contemporary with the Apostles and a man of rare ability, with a zeal and courage worthy of so noble a cause, repre-

* Belouino, vol. 1, p. 207.

sented to the emperor the injustice of persecuting the Christians, demonstrating to him at the same time the divinity of the Christian religion. As proof of this he appealed to the miracles performed by the Redeemer, the subjects of some of which were even then in existence. "The deeds," he said, "of our Savior were always before you, for they were true miracles: those that were healed; those that were raised from the dead, who were seen not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but when he had left the earth. So that some of them have lived to our own time." *

The apology of Quadratus was supplemented by another from Aristides. To the pleadings of these two eminent philosophers, the Church is indebted for the peace that ensued. The cause of the Christians was materially aided, at the same time, by the favorable representation forwarded by the pro-consul of Asia. In a communication replete with prudence and moderation, that officer represented to the emperor the unfairness and injustice of condemning the Christians unheard and without a violation of the law. The impression made upon the emperor by this, may be learned from the following: "Adrian to Minucius Fundanus—I have received the communication of the illustrious Irenæus Granarius, whom you have succeeded. I think it is necessary to examine the matter, so that these men may neither be harassed nor opportunity of malicious proceedings be offered to informers. If, therefore, the people of the provinces can maintain the accusations against the Christians before your tribunal, let them do so; but let them abstain from idle charges and vain complaint. It is far more just if any one wishes to accuse them that the matter be referred

* Quadratus apud Eusebium, b. 4, chap. iii.

to you. If, then, they are accused of having acted contrary to the law and that this can be proved, you will take cognizance of it, according to the nature of the crime. But if any one should employ, as a pretext to calumniate them, the fact of their religion, you shall not suffer such unworthy conduct, but shall punish it severely. —ADRIAN."

This was the first dawning of religious liberty for the hitherto poor, persecuted Christians. They saw themselves, now for the first time, treated as persons having certain rights and privileges, and they accordingly began to breathe more freely and to appear more openly. By this communication the emperor virtually repealed the old, existing law, whereby it was criminal to worship any but the deities acknowledged by the senate and enrolled in the Pantheon. As, however, an unfavorable interpretation was liable to be given to it, and especially as it had not been forwarded to all the governors of the provinces, room was still left for the exercise of cruelty. Indeed it is probable that even till the very end of the emperor's reign isolated cases of persecution continued.*

Besides the pagans, there was another enemy from whom the Christians suffered considerably at this period. That was the Jews. Under the leadership of Barchochebas they revolted against the Roman authority and exercised very freely their hatred of the Christian cause and name. Of the sufferings of the faithful from this source, the philosopher Justin Martyr remarks that they were subjected to the severest and most terrible tortures unless they denied and blasphemed the name of the Redeemer.*

Adrian died on the 10th of July, A. D. 138, and was succeeded by his adopted son Antoninus. This prince, like his patron, though not ranked amongst the number of the per-

* See Justin Martyr's Apology.

secutors, yet caused the Christians to suffer during a part of his reign. Of this the most satisfactory evidence is the emperor's ordinance to the authorities of Asia which is as follows: "The emperor Cæsar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus Armenicus, Pontifex Maximus, tribune of the people xv., consul III, sends greeting to the Assembly of Asia.—I know indeed that the gods themselves will take care that such men as these shall not escape detection. For it would more properly belong to them to punish those that will not worship them, than to you. And whilst you drive them into a tumult you only confirm them the more in their mind by accusing them as impious. And thus to them it would be more desirable when arraigned to appear to die for their God than to live. Whence also they come off in triumph, when they yield up their lives in preference to a conformity with those things you exact from them. But as to those earthquakes which have taken place and still continue, it is not out of place to admonish you, who are cast down whenever these happen, that you compare your own deportment with theirs. They indeed become on these occasions so much the more cheerful towards God; but you, the whole of this time in which you seem not to have correct knowledge, neglect both the gods and other duties, especially the worship of the Immortal. But the Christians who worship Him, you *expel and persecute to death.* Respecting these, however, many of the governors of the provinces also wrote to our most divine father. To whom also he wrote in reply not to trouble them at all unless they appeared to make attempts against the Roman government. Many also have sent communications to me respecting them, to whom also I wrote in reply, following the course pursued by my father. But if any still persevere in creating difficulties to any one of these because he is of this description (namely Christians) let him that is arraigned be absolved from crime, although

he should appear to be such, but let the accuser be held guilty.—ANTONINUS."

This ordinance was published at Ephesus in the general assembly or parliament of Asia. Its direct and immediate consequence was a cessation of hostilities and a securing to the Christians of a larger amount of personal liberty. They had not then the same dangers to encounter, the same risks to run, or the same sacrifices to make, in publicly proclaiming themselves followers of Christ. They were at liberty to move from place to place without fear of molestation at the hands of the authorities, a privilege which some of them turned to account in order to visit the seat of Catholic unity. Amongst these were Polycarp and Hegesippus, the former of whom contributed so largely to extinguish the prevailing heresy of the day.

The liberty that the Christians thus enjoyed, was but of short duration. It disappeared with the death of the prince who conferred it. In the subsequent reign, under Marcus Aurelius, the old spirit was revived in all its original antipathy. The numerous calamities with which the empire was visited at this period, served as a pretext for inciting the multitude against the members of the true faith. "The gods," cried the philosophers, "are irritated against us, and send us these sufferings on account of the deserted state of their temples, caused by the efforts of the Christians." What especially embittered the former against the Christians, was the public attention the latter were obtaining from the learned. Several of the newly converted Christians were men of considerable learning and ability, and in their controversies with the unbelievers proved themselves vastly superior. Of these, Justin, Tatian, Hermes and Tertullian were not the least. The first opened an academy at Rome where he luminously expounded the doctrines of the religion; and to the manner in which he handled the philosophi-

cal sects, is partly to be attributed the rancorous feeling excited against the believers. His disciple Tatian was equally bold, vigorous and uncomprising in defense of the truth. In a work entitled "A discourse against the Greeks," he thus laughs at the follies of the pretended philosophers: "What then are the great and admirable acts of your philosophers? They neglect to cover one of their shoulders, they nourish their hair, they cultivate their beards, and wear nails like beasts of prey. They say that they want nothing and still they have recourse to the tanner to make their wallet, to the weaver to make their clothes, to the turner to make their wand, to the rich and to the cooks to satisfy their gourmandism. O man, similiar to a dog, you know not God, and you imitate the beasts. You cry out in public, full of confidence in the generosity of the rich, and if you fail to receive what you expect, you avenge yourself in heaping injuries upon them. Thus philosophy is for you an art to make money."*

Hermes also combated nobly for the faith at that time, and exposed, very freely, the follies and fables of the philosophers. Under such circumstances, we are not to be surprised that the mind of the multitude was greatly incensed against the members of the true faith. The philosophers saw their system exposed, their influence undermined, and the sources of their power and gains rudely and successfully attacked. Enraged at this state of affairs, they prevailed upon the emperor to put into force and to execute with severity, the ancient laws and ordinances against the religion. But as a coloring was needed for the justification of this, the avowal of imaginary crimes was sought to be extorted from the faithful. To this end several, especially slaves, women and children, were put to the torture, and

* Tatian subsequently fell into heresy. He condemned marriage, and denied the salvation of our first parents.—See Ireneus, lib. i. de Heresis.

whenever, to escape their terrible sufferings, they confessed to imaginary guilt, this was regarded as sufficient to justify the severest of measures against the entire body. The temporal calamities, too, with which divine providence visited the empire at that time, were also turned to a like account, and made use of to inflame the mind of the multitude against the religion, for with these, in the pagan mind, were associated the crimes of the Christians. Thus if the Tiber overflowed its banks, if the crops failed, if locusts visited the lands, if a province revolted, or an army was unsuccessful in war, all was laid to the account of the Christians, as the objects of the displeasure of the gods. Hence the readiness with which the multitude, in consequence of the reverses sustained by the Roman arms in Germany, Britain and Armenia, at that period, were incited to clamor for the death of the noble Roman matron, Felicita and her seven sons. Taking advantage of the reverses referred to, the pagan priesthood sent deputies to the emperor, to represent to him the injury that was being done to the gods, and the consequences to the empire therefrom. "We believe," commenced the deputies, "that your majesty ought to be made acquainted with the fact that there is here at Rome a widow, a member of this sect, hateful to the gods, who does not cease to outrage them, and to irritate them against you and your empire. She is seconded in this impiety by her seven children who, like their mother, make sacrilegious vows, and will render the gods implacable, if your piety does not take care to appease them in obliging this impious family to render them the worship which is their due." Aurelius was of a religious disposition: he reverenced the gods and feared their displeasure. He accordingly gave orders to have the evil complained of immediately remedied. The prefect, Publius, to whom the task was intrusted of getting Felici-

ta to sacrifice to the gods, began by kind and flattering words, but ended by representing to her the sufferings that awaited her and her children in case of a refusal. To this the noble and intrepid woman answered in these courageous terms: "Don't imagine, Publius, that a weak compliance or a base fear would make Felicita forget what she owes to her God. Your menaces shall not shake me, no more than your promises shall seduce me. I bear in my breast that all powerful God: I feel that he fortifies me, and he shall never permit his servant to be overcome while she contends for his glory. Hence, Publius, you may either put me to death or allow me to live; but however you act, you will have the dishonor of being overcome by a woman." The prefect urged her still farther to compliance, on the ground of love for her children, to which like another Machabee she replied: "My children shall live if they refuse to sacrifice to your idols; but if their hands shall sacrilegiously offer incense to the idols, an eternal death shall be the punishment of their impiety."

That ended the interrogatory on that occasion. On the following day, the prefect again endeavored to shake the constancy of this heroic martyr; but in vain. To his reiterated entreaties that she would have compassion on her children, then in the flower of youth, she answered in these noble words: "Keep for others your false compassion; we don't require it; we even abhor your apparent clemency, which in effect is only a terrible impiety." Then turning to her children she addressed them thus: "Behold, my children, the heavens so beautiful. It is there that Jesus Christ awaits you to crown you. Fight bravely for his glory and for your own, and prove yourselves worthy of so great a monarch who is so deserving of your attachment." These words served only to enrage the prefect, and caused him to cry out in a paroxysm of anger: "Darest thou, in my

presence, inspire them with such sentiments, and induce them to despise the emperor's orders?" Next addressing himself to the children, individually, he endeavored to obtain from them what he failed to extort from their mother. But animated with the same, noble, heroic spirit, worthy offspring of a worthy mother, they one and all indignantly rejected his insiduous advances, and accepted death, rather than betray their holy profession. On their refusal to comply with the impious demands, an official report of the interrogatories was forwarded to the emperor, who awarded them capital punishment, and committed its execution to different officers.

It was not to be expected that the example set by the emperor at Rome, would be overlooked by the governors of the provinces. Indeed, they only eagerly awaited a pretext for the persecution of a system they so ardently hated. Accordingly, the sword was unsheathed, and a persecution commenced, which was especially felt in the east. Amongst those who thus suffered at this period, in the cause of divine truth, was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and disciple of St. John. This venerable man, then greatly advanced in years, after governing the church of Smyrna,* for upwards of half a century, was destined to illustrate it still farther by his glorious death. At the earnest solicitation of the faithful, he withdrew during the first outburst of the persecution, to a little hamlet in the suburbs. There undisturbed, and mindful of the fate that awaited him, he poured forth his soul in constant and fervent prayer for his flock, and for the whole Church of Christ. His withdrawal was not on account of his fears, as was very clearly demonstrated afterwards, but with the view of ministering more efficiently to

* According to Feller, Polycarp was consecrated bishop of Smyrna, A. D., 96. See Feller, vol. vi, p. 473.—The date of his martyrdom is uncertain, some placing it in the year 147, and others extending it to A. D. 178. See Goshler, vol. xviii, p. 473.

the wants of his people, having before his eyes the admonition of his divine Master: "When they persecute you in one place, fly to an other." Three days before his apprehension, he was divinely instructed of the death that awaited him. In a dream he imagined that his church was on fire, and his head surrounded by flames. Taking this as an indication of the martyrdom he was to endure, he assured his friends that he would be burned for the faith, a prediction which was quickly fulfilled. He was betrayed by two little boys, who under the pressure of suffering, disclosed the place of his concealment. A squadron of archers and some cavalry were immediately despatched to make the arrest. The bishop had intimation of their approach, and could have readily made his escape. But, like his divine Master, he preferred yielding himself up to his persecutors, uttering at the same time, these memorable words: "May thy will be done, O Lord! I fled as thou knowest, and as thou hast commanded, but now I yield myself to my enemies, because you will it also." He then intrusted himself to his pursuers, offered them refreshments, and requested to be permitted to spend a little time in prayer. This ended, they took the way back to the city. On the road they were met by the chief of the administration, who courteously invited the saint to a place in his carriage, in the hope that by kindness and caresses, he might get him to abandon his purpose, and conform to the orders of the emperor. At length, wearied by repeated importunities, and desirous of teaching his tormentor the inutility of pressing him further, the noble old man with a zeal, a firmness and enthusiasm, worthy of a faithful soldier of the cross, cried out in these words: "No, nothing shall ever cause me to change my sentiments. Neither the sword, nor fire, nor prison, nor exile, nor all evils together, shall ever cause me to offer incense to a man, or, what is still more horrible, to demons." This was too much

for the tempter, and in a rage, he hurled him from the chariot severely injuring him by the fall, and endangering his life.

On arriving in the amphitheatre a celestial voice was distinctly heard by the Christians, addressing the saint: "Polycarp have courage!" Being conducted to the foot of the pro-consul's throne, the old bishop was if possible more courageous than ever. He felt that he was then a spectacle for men and angels. Around him on all sides were the enemies of the cross and the haters of divine truth, while, mingling with the crowd, were numerous Christians whose faith would be shaken or strengthened according as their bishop showed signs of timidity or courage. Accordingly summoning all the strength of which he was capable and of which he had need in that critical moment, he boldly and loudly cried out, proclaiming his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and professing himself ready to die for his cause. "Abandon this boldness," shouted the consul; "spare your old age. Do you imagine you are able to endure torments the mere sight of which is enough to make the boldest tremble? What difficulty is there in swearing by the fortune of the emperor? Take my a vice, renounce your superstitions: there is nothing shameful in repenting, since Cæsar and the gods demand it. Say then boldly to the multitude, away with the impious, down with the impious."* Polycarp surveying the entire assembly and raising his eyes towards heaven, amid profound and breathless silence, exclaimed. "Away with the impious, down with the impious." "Finish," cried the consul; "swear by the fortune of the emperor, blaspheme Christ." "It is four score years," returned the saint, "that I serve him; he has never done me any evil, but on the contrary has loaded me with favors and you desire me to

* Eusebius, b. 4, chap. 15.

insult him. You desire me to outrage my Lord and my master, from whom I expect happiness, in whom I put all my hope and who is my glory. How can I offend him who has only favors for me, him whom I ought alone to love, who protects me and declares himself an enemy of all those who hate me." The consul still insisting upon his swearing by the fortune of the emperor, the saint continued: "Why do you press me: are you ignorant of what my religion is; do you not know that I am a Christian? If you want to learn what my doctrine is, give me a day and I will instruct you." "It is the people," replied the consul, "and not me that have to be satisfied. It is to them that you have to render an account of your belief." "To them," answered Polycarp: "they are unworthy of it, but I owe this deference to your dignity provided you do not abuse your power in endeavoring to make me do anything unworthy. It is thus that our religion teaches us to render to the powers that be the honor that is their due."

"Enough," briskly answered the judge; "understand that I have bears and lions to avenge our gods." "Let them come forth," promptly replied the saint; "let them come to satisfy on me their rage and your fury. Employ all the cruelty that tyrants have invented to deprive me of life; still I shall triumph in my torments, I shall joyfully behold any blood flowing, and the greater my pains the greater also shall be my glory. My soul is prepared for all. I do not fear either pains or shame." "You dare me," answered the consul, "and your presumptuous audacity makes you despise the terrors of the wild beast. Let us see if the same boldness shall be proof against fire." "The fire you threaten me with," said the bishop, "shall quickly pass; an hour or two at most and it shall lose its power. But that which the sovereign judge has enkindled to burn the impious, shall never be extinguished. But to what avail do I

speak. Hasten to do with me what your cruelty suggests, and if some additional torture should be thought of by you, don't fear to make me endure it." A herald was then appointed to proclaim aloud his disobedience, who cried out: "Polycarp persists in professing himself a Christian." No sooner had these words been uttered than the voice of the mob arose in anger: "He is the father of the Christians, he is the enemy of the gods and the profaner of their temples. This is he who has been everywhere destroying our religion and condemning the worship of the immortal gods. Let him die, let him find what he has long since sought." Then they besought Philip, the prefect, to let loose upon him a lion, but, as the time allotted for the spectacles had drawn to a close, this was denied. "Let him be burned alive," then shouted the multitude, and when the order was given for this, the people ran wildly around gathering from every quarter, from the baths, the shops and private abodes, the fuel necessary for the accomplishment of the deed. Jews and Gentiles vied with each other in this infamous eagerness, but especially the former who signalized themselves most remarkably on the occasion. When the pyre was prepared and the officers of the law were about attaching their victim to the stake, the venerable patriarch, laying aside his outer garments, begged them to desist, assuring them that he who gave him strength to prŏfess the truth would also give him power to endure the fire. The executioners accordingly desisted and contented themselves with binding his hands behind his back and, thus secured, he ascended the altar of sacrifice. Standing surrounded by the inflammable material, awaiting the torch to be applied, he poured forth to his heavenly father this admirable prayer: "Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the knowledge of thee, the God of Angels and powers and all creation,

and of all the family of the righteous that live before thee, I bless thee that thou hast thought me worthy of the present day and hour to have a share in the number of the martyrs and in the cup of Christ unto the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, in the incorruptible felicity of the Holy Spirit." Hardly had he concluded than the torch was applied; but as a miraculous proof of the truth of the cause he sustained, instead of consuming the martyr, the flames rose in the shape of an arch over his head and refused to touch even his garments. A fragrant odor at the same time diffused itself all around and was experienced by all. These were the evidences given by the Lord of the sanctity of his servant and the truth of the cause that he represented. The unbelievers were thus convinced by the testimony of their own senses of how nature itself respected the Christians and gave evidence of the truth of their doctrine. Seeing that the fire refused to perform its work the magistrate, still obstinate in his unbelief, ordered an executioner to despatch the martyr with the sword. On his attempt, an additional miracle attested the sanctity of the saint. For no sooner had the executioner, in compliance with the orders of the commander, plunged the sword into the breast of Polycarp than such a quantity of blood instantly issued from the wound as to extinguish the flames. Thus died, nobly attesting to the faith, the disciple of St. John, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna.

Not contented with depriving the Church of so glorious a champion, the enemy of mankind sought now to prevent his remains being obtained by the Christians. To this end, at the suggestions of the evil one, the authorities ordered the body to be burned. But even in this they were defeated, for the Christians gathering the bones after the flames had done their work, preserved them as the most precious of relics.

CHAPTER XIII.

APOLOGY FOR THE CHRISTIANS BY JUSTIN MARTYR—HIS MARTYRDOM—APOLLINARIS OF HIERAPOLIS PRESENTS AN APOLOGY—THE MIRACLE OF THE THUNDERING LEGION—PEACE IN CONSEQUENCE—RENEWAL OF THE PERSECUTION—PUNISHMENT OF MARCUS AURELIUS—PERSECUTION UNDER COMMODUS—IT CEASES—HOW THIS HAPPENED—ACCESSION OF PERTINAX—HE RECALLS THE CHRISTIANS.

The violence of the persecution in Rome and the provinces at the period at which we are now arrived, A. D. 166, was of so cruel a nature as to evoke a second defense or apology from that undaunted champion of the faith Justin Martyr. In this admirable document, as brilliant as it was logical, the writer answers the objections of the unbelievers, appeals to the miracles performed in the religion as a testimony of its truth, and points to the purity and sublimity of the doctrine as an evidence of its origin. The only result was the apprehension of the author and his punishment. He did not very likely anticipate any more favorable result, but he felt it a duty to protest against the tyranny of the authorities and to appeal in behalf of divine truth. In his interrogatory before the prefect of the city his courage and ability were equally displayed. "What science or art do you profess?" demanded the judge. "Hitherto," replied Justin, "I have labored to acquire all natural and human science. There has been no kind of erudition in which, through curiosity, I have not made some progress. But eventually I was arrested by the science of the Christians, although it has no attractions for those who desire only error." "What," replied the interrog-

ator, "does this science please you?" Without doubt," answered Justin, "because it makes me walk with the Christians in the way of truth and contains a pure and holy doctrine." "What is that doctrine?" enquired the prefect. "The doctrine," said Justin, "which the Christians follow consists in believing that there is only one God, who has created all things visible and invisible; in recognizing an only Savior who is Christ Jesus—only Son of God, foretold and announced by the prophets who will come to judge the living and the dead. He is the author of salvation and is come to announce it in the world. He is pleased to be the master of those who desire to learn from him the truth that he teaches. As for me I am a person of little intelligence: I acknowledge that I have too little light to speak of his divinity in a manner worthy of it. It belongs to the prophets to penetrate this abyss of grandeur and there are they who, by divine illumination, have predicted the advent of him whom I call his Son and they predicted it several ages before he appeared in the world."

The prefect then applied himself to interrogating others who had been arrested with Justin, but finding them all of one sentiment he pronounced their sentence and ordered them to be whipped and beheaded, a punishment they endured with the most admirable fortitude, praising and glorifying God that they were deemed worthy to suffer for his name.

The martyrdom of Polycarp, as related above, had the effect of extinguishing for a time the fire of persecution in the east. The same was partially the result of the martyrdom of Justin, in the west The smoldering embers, however, were still unquenched; they contained the fatal spark which at any moment might cause the flames to burst forth anew as in effect they did, A. D. 170. The greatness of this persecution the reader may judge of from the description given

of it by Miletus, bishop of Sardis. In an apology addressed to the emperor, he represents the condition of the Christians as one of deplorable suffering. Greed and avarice enriched themselves at the expense of the faithful believers. Taking advantage of the penal enactments several made use of them to rob and plunder the Christians, driving them from their homes and scattering them broad-cast all over the country. The entire passage is as follows: "What never before happened, the race of the pious is now persecuted, driven about in Asia by new and strange decrees. For the shameless and those that crave the property of others, taking occasion from the edicts of the emperor, openly perpetrate robbery and plunder, night and day, those who are guilty of no crime. . . . And if those things are done by your orders, let them be done at least in a proper way. For a just ruler should never form unjust decrees. We indeed cheerfully bear the reward of such a death, but we only urge upon you this request, that you yourself take cognizance of these plotters of mischief and justly judge whether they deserve punishment and death or safety and immunity." *

Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia, presented a like remonstrance about the same time. Whether to these apologies is to be attributed the change that took place in the emperor's policy at this date, or to the miraculous interposition of divine providence in saving him and his army from utter destruction at the earnest intercession of the Christians, it might be difficult to say. Perhaps to both it is to be partly referred, but however that may be, he issued an ordinance making it capital punishment for any one to proceed against a Christian, though strangely enough the laws were still in existence which made the profession of Christianity a crime. The spe-

* Apud Belouino, vol. i.

cial interposition of divine providence referred to, is the well-known miracle of the "thundering legion." The circumstances attending this are these. In his war with the Quadri, a barbarous German tribe, the emperor and his troops advanced incautiously into the country of the enemy, so that their position became critical. Discouraged by a recent defeat, weakened by the heat, and languishing from want of water, their misfortunes were still further increased by a refusal on the part of the enemy to meet them in battle. Occupying an advantageous, elevated position he made advance or retreat for the Romans impossible, so that there was not left for them the ordinary solace of dying bravely engaging the enemy. While in this deplorable condition, with little or no hope of delivery, the Melitine legion, composed largely if not exclusively of Christians, dropped on their knees and poured forth to the Almighty fervent supplications for the safety of the army. Immediately the heavens were overcast, the clouds grew heavy, they descended towards the earth, and discharged such an abundant and refreshing shower as satisfied the needs of the troops and the animals. Taking advantage of their then apparently unfavorable situation, while engaged in allaying their thirst, the Quadri prepared for an attack. But in this they entirely miscalculated, for while they advanced towards the line of the Romans, the heavens by a disposition of divine providence, became immediately armed against them and discharged in their face such a storm of hail and rain, accompanied by thunder and lightning (the troops of Aurelius being at the same time free from the visitation), that regarding the phenomena as the direct displeasure of God, several of the Quadri abandoned their arms and fled for protection to the camp of the Romans. Such was the impression this miraculous occurrence made on the mind of the emperor, that he immedi-

ately published an edict favorable to the Christians. That he partly attributed the miracle and the preservation of his army in consequence to the intercession of the Christians, is vouched for by Tertullian, who writing five and twenty years later hesitated not to affirm in the following language that there was then extant documentary evidence in the emperor's handwriting to this effect: "There are epistles of the most learned emperor Marcus still extant in which he himself bears testimony that, when the army was ready to perish from the want of water, it was fortunately saved by the prayers of the Christians."* Even down to the beginning of the fifth century, these letters were still extant, according to the testimony of St. Jerome,† who quotes Tertullian's words. It is true that in the account given by Dion, the earliest pagan writer on the subject, there is no reference made to the Christians, but this is not to be wondered at, inasmuch as he would more naturally attribute the miracle to Jupiter or some other of the pagan divinities, rather than to the God of the Christians. In consequence, some modern writers, and notably the author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, have attempted to discredit this miracle, at least as far as it was Christian. Gibbon is not willing to admit that the emperor's edict, issued immediately after in favor of the faithful, was in consequence of any supposed favor received by their intercession on the occasion. This writer's bias is especially remarkable, when he questions the fact of there being any Christians at all in the army at the time. Fortunately there is the most satisfactory evidence

* The original is this: "Cæterum de tot exinde principibus usque ad hodiernum divinum humanumque sapientibus edite aliquem debeilatorem Christianorum. At nos e contrario edimus protectorem si literæ M. Aurelii gravissimi imperatoris requirantur quibus illam Germanicam sitim Christianorum forte militum precationibus impetrato imbri discussam contestatur." Tertullianus, vol. I., p. 315.

† Extant literæ M. Aurelii gravissimi, etc.

that there were. Of this we have the testimony of two respectable contemporary writers, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, and Tertullian the apologist. The latter, as we have said, makes even the emperor a firm believer in the Christian origin of the marvellous event, and in support thereof refers, as has been stated, to the emperor's own letter. If such a document did not exist, it is incredible to think that Tertullian would have made such a statement for the certainty of being convicted of untruth, if nothing else, would have prevented him. The fact, too, of the emperor having published an edict immediately after favorable to the Christians, is strongly confirmatory of at least his partial belief in the Christian origin of the miracle. For no other circumstance that we know of could have induced him at the time to adopt such a course.

Gibbon also draws another argument, in favor of his position, from the Antonine Column erected in memory of the event at Rome—the pagan divinities, Jupiter and Mercury, being there set forth as the authors of the miraculous occurence: "But we are still assured by monuments of brass and marble, by the imperial medals and by the Antonine Column, that neither the prince nor people entertained any sense of this signal obligation, since they unanimously attribute their deliverance to the providence of Jupiter and the interposition of Mercury." * There is no difficulty in reconciling the character of the column with Tertullian's assertion. It by no means disproves his assertion regarding the emperor's belief in the Christian origin of the occurrence. Paulus Orosius, too, asserts that the emperor believed unqualifiedly in the Christian origin of the event. But as Orosius was not a contemporary writer and obtained his information,

* Vol. ii., p. 47.

in all probability, from Tertullian, his testimony is not of so much weight.* The most probable and satisfactory explanation of the entire affair seems to be that furnished by Stolberg, and which is to the effect that as both pagans and Christians found themselves involved in the same common danger, both respectively addressed their petitions to heaven, and the former, regarding as the result of their supplications what was accorded to the latter, commemorated the event in the manner referred to. And in fact the pagan writers, Dion Cassius and Claudian, who relate the affair, attribute the miracle, the former to the incantations of the magicians, and the latter to the prayers of the emperor. But though this may have been the belief of the army in general, we can readily understand how the emperor, from the circumstances attending the occurrence, may have been inclined to attribute it partially, if not exclusively, to the prayers of the faithful. Viewing the matter, then, in an entirely impartial spirit and on its general merits, it must be acknowledged, even by the most sceptical minded, that the weight of the argument is wholly in favor of the Christian origin of the occurrence. For while no well authenticated miraculous occurrence of that or any other period can be referred to as the result of the prayers or incantations of the pagan magicians, innumerable instances are at hand in which the Almighty, at the prayers of his faithful servants, sus-

* Ad invocationem nominis Christi, quam subito magna fidei constantia quidam milites effusi in preces palam fecerunt, tanta vis pluviæ effusa est, ut Romanos quidem largissime ac sine injuria refecerit, barbaros autem crebris fulminum ictibus perterritos, præsertim cum plurimi eorum occiderentur, in fugam coegerit. Quorum terga Romani usque ad internecionem cædentes gloriosissimam victoriam, et omnibus pene antiquorum titulis præferendam, rudi parvoque militium numero sed potentissimo Christi auxilio, reportarunt. Extare etiam nunc apud plerosque dicuntur literæ imperatoris Antonini ubi invocatione nominis Christi per milites Christianos, et sitim illam depulsam et collatam fatetur fuisse victoriam. Paulus Orosius: lib. iii., vol. ii, caput, xv., p. 494.

pended the laws of nature and thus performed miraculous works.*

The favorable impression made on the mind of Aurelius was not of long duration. It influenced him only temporarily in protecting the Christians and saving them from the fury of the unbelievers. Hence three years later, A. D. 177, when the spirit of persecution was again evoked in all its original force he suffered the members of the true faith to be dealt with according to the whims, the caprices, and antipathy of the pagans. This time the opening scenes of the Christians' sufferings were in Gaul. There the renowned disciples of Polycarp, Pottin, Benignus and others who had gone there to spread the faith in that, to them, distant land, valiantly upheld the true doctrine of Christ and sealed with their blood the truths which they taught. In a letter forwarded by the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the brethren in Asia we learn the true character of the sufferings endured by the Christians of Gaul at that period: "Our words could never express nor our pen paint the evils which the blind rage of the gentiles has perpetrated against the saints nor all that their unrelenting animosity has made the blessed martyrs endure." The wri-

* There has been a great deal of misapprehension regarding this miracle. It is generally supposed that the 12th legion received the appellation of "thundering" on that occasion. This is even asserted by Eusebius, who took it from Apollinaris; but the fact is, that it was called by that title under Augustus. Again, there is no solid foundation for maintaining that the legion was composed wholly of Christians. Xiphilinus, a Byzantine writer of the 11th century, says so, but this writer's testimony is of little or no value, inasmuch as he does not furnish any reliable contemporary author's assertion to that effect. It is true, Eusebius would seem to leave it to be understood, but as there are various editions and renderings of that author's text, it would be difficult to say what he actually affirmed. Anyhow, his testimony should be received with caution, for, as we have stated, following Apollinaris, he attributed the origin of the appellation, "fulminans," to the miracle wrought on the occasion, whereas it is now universally acknowledged that the legion was in the enjoyment of that title long before. The fact, however of Eusebius being mistaken in the origin of the name of the legion by no means invalidates the miracle itself.—Author.

ter then enters into a detailed account of the particular sufferings of the martyrs.

The persecution in Gaul was commenced by the governor of Lyons without the express orders of the emperor and entirely as a tribute to the demands of the people. But as the work of blood continued, reference was made to his majesty, a precaution in no way necessary; for his desires were in harmony with the cruel instincts of the people. While the sword of persecution was thus freely employed in the west, the enemies of the Cross again rose against the Christians in the east. This called forth two splendid apologies, one from Athenagoras and another from Miltiades. But in vain did these champions of the faith reason with their tormentors; the persecution still went on in all its fury and ended only with the death of the emperor.

Marcus Aurelius, like all his predecessors in the empire who persecuted the Christians, was punished by the Almighty for his crimes against the religion. Having indulged the idea that the lessons of human wisdom sufficed for the happiness of men and the government of peoples, he had the chagrin of beholding the error of his principles in the vices and impiety of his son. He even descended into the grave not without a suspicion of being the victim of the ambitious designs of his own unnatural child. And as he lay upon the bed of death, with the view of the glory of all his reign about to be dissipated by so unworthy a successor, he acknowledged to his attendants how life had become a burden to him and how ardently he desired to be relieved therefrom.

The situation of the Christians during the first years of the reign of Commodus was in nothing altered for the better. Persecution still continued and in some instances with even still greater violence. Thus Arrius Antoninus, the pro-consul of Asia, so harassed the faithful that, seeing no other

means of stopping the tyrant, the inhabitants of an entire village came before his tribunal and declared themselves Christians. This so disconcerted the consul, that, seeing the impossibility of extinguishing the religion in the blood of its professors, without depopulating the land, he abandoned his cruel designs.

At Rome the senate was equally active in persecuting the faithful. The profligate habits of the youthful emperor during the first three years of his reign, and his entire inattention to public affairs left that body at liberty to pursue with violence the faithful followers of the Redeemer. The crimes the authorities were thus perpetrating against the chosen of God, were earning for them in the designs of divine providence a fearful retribution at the hands of their sovereign. This they called forth by an attempt on the emperor's life. One night as he was returning to his palace a hired assassin rushed upon him with a drawn sword, exclaiming as he endeavored to bury the weapon in his body: "The senate sends you this." By an adroit movement Commodus saved himself from the intended blow, but ever after entertained a hatred for the senate which nothing could eradicate.*

An unlooked-for occurrence at that time favorably disposed the emperor towards the Christians, and obtained for the Church a repose which was most advantageous. Having exiled his lawful wife Crispina for infidelity, Commodus took to himself a concubine named Marcia who was a Christian and who obtained such an influence over her master as to favorably dispose him towards the religion. Persecution accordingly ceased through the empire and the faith in consequence made wonderful progress. "About the same period," writes Eusebius, "in the reign of Commodus our circumstances were changed to a milder aspect, as there was

* Dion, lib. 4, chap. xxii, p. 1205.

peace by the grace of God prevailing in the churches throughout the world. Then also the salutary doctrine brought the minds of men from every race on earth to the devout veneration of the supreme God. So that now, many of those eminent at Rome for their wealth and kindred, with their whole house and family, yielded to their salvation."* The peace of the Church of God originating in such a manner is one of those dispensations of divine providence for which we are entirely unable to account and have only to exclaim with the Apostle: "How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways."†

The freedom which the Christians enjoyed from persecution during the greater part of Commodus' reign is not to be taken as an evidence of that monarch's naturally peaceable disposition. On the contrary, he was cruel and bloodthirsty in the extreme and it was to his ferocity that he was beholden for his death. Alarmed at the fate of the numerous victims, constantly added to the list of the proscribed by the fears and hatred of the emperor, Marcia, with whose position the reader is acquainted, in union with Eclectus, the chamberlain, and Lotus, the pretorian prefect, entered into a conspiracy to deprive their master of life. The deed of violence was begun by Marcia plying her lover with a draught of poisoned wine and, while laboring under the double effect of the wine and the poison, he was strangled by a youth introduced for that purpose, and thus ingloriously perished, A. D. 192, after a dissolute reign of eleven years.

The next object of the conspirators, was to place on the throne a man of recognized merit, whose virtues would be a guarantee against the crimes and excesses of which the late emperor was guilty. With this view they fixed upon Pertinax, the prefect of the city, as the most suitable candi-

* Eusebius, B. v. chap. 21. † Romans, chap. xi, v. 33.

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date. His long, unsullied career in office, his conspicuous merit and the prudence with which he discharged his official obligations, pointed him out as the most eligible person to occupy the first position in the empire. He was accordingly conducted to the pretorian camp and acknowledged by that body as emperor, though not without considerable regret for his predecessor, to whom the pretorian guard was strongly attached. The election was ratified by the senate and much more approvingly than by the guard, for to that body the death of the prince meant a freedom from fear and a pledge against violence.

In his new station the newly elected emperor justified fully the favorable opinion entertained of him by his friends. He displayed those admirable qualities—justice, firmness and moderation, so important in a ruler. Amongst his first acts were a release from prison and a recall from exile of those numerous victims who had been unjustly condemned during his predecessor's reign. Into the state, he introduced the strictest economy, abolished oppressive taxation, encouraged speculation and relieved the commercial interests of the empire from the obstructions placed in their way. Such admirable qualities naturally caused him to be loved by the people, but the very merits that should have secured to him a continuance of power and a tenure of office were those very qualities that led to his dethronement and death. The soldiers of the pretorian guard, regretting the freedom and licentiousness of the former reign, and fearing a still greater reform, grew impatient under the laudible restraint imposed upon them and ended by rising in a general revolt, A few hundred of the most daring, hastened immediately to the palace and imbrued their hands in the blood of the monarch. Their subsequent conduct was as shameless as the murder of the ruler was barbarous and cruel. They not only violated

the sanctity of the throne, but they dishonored the majesty of the empire. Seeking only the gratification of their evil desires and without any regard for the welfare of the empire, these guardians of the peace now proceeded to the degrading extreme of vending the sovereignity of the nation. Only two, Didius Julianus a senator and Sulpicius, were wealthy enough and reckless enough to compete for the prize. To the former it was knocked down for the considerable sum of 6,250 drachmas or 200 pounds for every soldier. A more fatal and foolish bargain could hardly be contracted. It was purchasing at a great cost dishonor and death. The Roman people indignant at the ignominious traffic and the daring insult thus offered them, sullenly refused to endorse the novel measure, while the legions in Britain, Syria, and Pannonia, to show their contempt for such a proceeding, raised respectively, to the throne favorites of their own, viz., Claudius Albinus, Pescennius Niger, and Septimius Severus. Thus three formidable competitors entered the list for the glittering prize, nor was it till after a series of contests extending over a period of nearly four years that the last named, Severus, became undisputed master of the empire.

During these years of political strife, the Christians enjoyed a term of repose. The minds of the authorities were too much engaged in higher concerns to occupy themselves with the affairs of the meek followers of the Redeemer. Even during the first year of the reign of Severus, the Christians were every-where at liberty to profess without molestation their holy religion. The emperor even protected them publicly against popular violence and extended to them marks of his favor. Taking advantage of this immunity from violence, the guardians of divine truth held numerous councils for the correction of error, the reformation of discipline and the extension of the

faith.* Such an impetus did this give to the spread of divine truth that the numbers of the believers vastly outnumbered those of the pagans, for Tertullian assures us, that if the former withdrew from the empire, they would leave it a solitude. Such remarkable success could not but arouse the rage of the enemy of mankind. Pretexts were not wanting, as they never have been, for incriminating the faithful when the occasion demanded it. Did they abstain from going with the unbelievers in rendering idolatrous honors to the emperor they were pronounced guilty of disloyalty: were they more eager to attain the things of heaven, than those of earth, they were lazy and worthless; did they hold themselves aloof from cabals and intrigues, they were bad and contemptible citizens. On the other hand whatever calamity or misfortune happened in the community was attributed to the Christians. Hence, in the midst of their highest enjoyments, in their public games and amusements, as an offering to the tutelary deities by a common, impulse the cry was often raised: "The Christians to the lions!" From their religious saturnalia, too, where every moral restraint and moderation was abandoned, the unbelievers would rush to the tombs of the Christians, and under the plea of honoring the pagan divinities, would scatter to the winds, and otherwise desecrate, the remains of the faithful. The magistrates instead of repressing these excesses were only too ready to second them. They even made the sole avowal of being a Christian, a sufficient transgression to punish the offender with torture and death. Against this horrible system of injustice, blindness and prejudice, the renowned Tertullian, a man of rare genius and ability raised, his voice and employed his learning. In an apology, which he addressed to the people and magistrates of Rome, this fearless champion of the truth begins

* Councils were held at this time at Rome, at Ephesus, Corinth, &c.

by demanding a hearing for the Christians. All that the religion demands, he assures his readers, is that it be not condemned unheard. What more unjust, he asks, than to hate what we do not know? and then he charges the Christians' persecutors if they have any proof, to bring it forward against the believers. The only effect of this remonstrance was to make the pagans still more enraged. Those who do not desire to know the truth, hate the light. The emperor, being then in Palestine, issued an edict prohibiting any from becoming Christians. At the same time the most violent persecutions raged all over the empire. The authorities every-where were at liberty to persecute the faithful. The Christians accordingly suffered in great numbers; but especially at Alexandria as we learn from Eusebius: "But when Severus raised a persecution against the Church, there were illustrious testimonies given by the combatants of religion in all the churches every-where. They particularly abounded in Alexandria, whilst the heroic wrestlers from Egypt and Thebais, were escorted thither as to a mighty theatre of God, where by their invincible patience under various tortures and modes of death they were adorned with crowns from heaven."* At Lyons, where Irenæus was martyred, the number that suffered for the faith is estimated at 19,000; while in Africa, under the consul Saturninus, the number was very great.†

The Christians did all in their power to appease the fury of their persecutors. They abstained from assembling in public; they fled at the approach of their enemies in accordance with the admonition of the Savior, and not unfrequently appeased the fury of their persecutors by the payment of considerable sums. On the other hand, the Montanists, a body of fanatical sectaries who denied the

* Eusebius, b. vi., chap. i.

† See Ruinart.

power of the Church to remit certain sins, enjoined upon their followers the sinfulness of saving themselves by flight. Into this and the other errors of the party the great Tertullian unhappily fell; but while the Almighty, in the inscrutable decrees of his divine providence, permitted this illustrious man to be lost to the faith, he failed not to compensate for the loss, in raising up another equally illustrious champion of divine truth in the person of Origen, a presbyter of Alexandria. But he, too, unhappily advanced assertions that were far from being in accordance with truth. Yet we may charitably hope that when made aquainted with his errors he repented thereof.

In accordance with the uniform course of divine providence in chastising the persecutors of the faithful, the last years of Severus' life were a visible proof of the displeasure of heaven against that cruel oppressor on account of his manifold crimes against the religion of Christ. The Britains having revolted at this time against the Roman authority, the emperor undertook to subdue them in person and to that end passed into their country, A. D. 208. But though he spent in this arduous work two entire years and lost both in battle and by disease no less than 50,000 of his troops, he had yet the chagrin to learn that the country was far from being wholly subdued. A still greater affliction was reserved for him in the unnatural conduct of his son and colleague Caracalla. This profligate youth, impatient to arrive at the sovereign authority, entered into a conspiracy with some of his favorites to deprive his father of life. But this coming to the knowledge of the emperor, the project miscarried. The conspirators were condemned to death, but immediately pardoned with the hope that the exercise of such unusual clemency would make an impression on Caracalla. But so far from this being the case, the unnatural son

attempted shortly after to compass the same by raising a sedition in the army; and when this proved abortive, he attempted by his own hand to deprive his parent of existence! Sorely grieved and humiliated at this repeated attempt upon his life, by one who should be the first to guard and defend it, but yet preserving his parental affection for his child, the aged emperor had recourse to one of those extraordinary measures which love alone could suggest as the most effectual means of winning back the offender. Entering into his tent Severus called his ungrateful child to himself and in the presence of the prefect of the pretorian guard and of Castor a freedman, presenting him a sword addressed him thus: "If you wish to slay me, take this sword which I present to you and execute your designs. You are young and vigorous but I am an old and infirm man. The matter is easy. If shame withold your arm, command Papinien here present to rid you of me. We will obey you, for are you not emperor." What heart would not be touched at this address? What son guilty of attempted patricide would not have been reclaimed by so feeling and noble a sentiment? But Caracalla was irreclaimable. It is true he did not accept the offer and plunge the dagger into his parent's bosom. Shame or perhaps surprise at the novelty of the situation, controlled his desire; but he retained the murderous design as was shown later on when, an occasion having offered, he endeavored to induce the royal physican to administer poison to his unhappy parent. Seeing the irreclaimable character of his profligate son, the emperor now became a prey to despair and demanded the favor of being deprived of existence. But no one being willing to render him this kindness, he gorged himself to excess with the view of compassing his own death—a result which he effected acccordingly, A. D. 211.

CHAPTER XIV.

ACCESSION OF CARACALLA AND GETA—THE CONDITION OF THE CHRISTIANS NOTHING BETTER UNDER THESE—MAXIMIN BECOMES EMPEROR—HE PERSECUTES THE FAITHFUL—HIS DEATH—HE IS SLAIN BY HIS OWN TROOPS—TRANQUILLITY ENJOYED BY THE CHURCH—FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS—THE ENEMY OF MANKIND AVAILS HIMSELF OF THIS RELAXATION OF FERVOR ON THE PART OF THE CHRISTIANS—PERSECUTION ENSUES—NUMBERS APOSTATIZE—SOME TRY TO EFFECT A COMPROMISE—THE LIBELLATICI—DECIUS' DEATH—GALLUS SUCCEEDS AND PERSECUTES—POPE CORNELIUS' MARTYRDOM—CYPRIAN'S LETTER TO POPE LUCIUS—THE NUMBERS THAT DIED FOR THE FAITH AT THIS PERIOD.

The death of Severus left the empire in the hands of his two sons, Caracalla and Geta. The situation of the Christians was in no way bettered during the first year of their reign. In Africa especially the faithful were persecuted with the greatest animosity under the governor Scapula, who proceeded to the frightful extreme of burning the Christians alive. This horrible barbarity aroused the virtuous indignation of Tertullian and caused him to address a letter of remonstrance to that official protesting against the shameful proceedings. In it he assured him that the Christians were not ashamed of their holy profession, that from the day they enrolled themselves under the banner of the cross, they were aware that their lives were at stake, and that the only advantage they could hope to obtain from the contest would be the good promised by God to his faithful disciples in the world to come. Whether it was owing to this or to some other cause, it might be difficult to say, but the persecution ceased and the Christians were at liberty to follow their holy profession during the re-

mainder of Caracalla's reign. The same freedom from suffering was enjoyed by them during the rule of his successors, Maximin, Heliogabalus, and Alexander. Some few indeed suffered for the faith during the last named emperor's reign, but this was owing to popular, commotions and not to any decree of the emperor.

Alexander was slain in Germany at the instigation of Maximin, who immediately mounted the imperial throne. From the moment this prince was invested with the purple he manifested the strongest dislike for the friends and adherents of the late monarch. To have been in the confidence of Alexander was to be hated by Maximin. The Christians who, in consequence of the freedom they enjoyed, were strongly attached to the late ruler, became accordingly special objects of Maximin's aversion. At first he ordered only the chief dignitaries to be slain, but as time went on the sword was drawn indiscriminately against all.

To another cause may be also partly attributed the fury with which Maximin persecuted the faithful. It was customary with the emperors on the occasion of their elevation to the imperial dignity to bestow presents and crowns of honor on the troops. A certain Christian soldier, through religious scruples, refused to receive the proffered honor at the emperor's hand, and when asked for a reason assigned as a cause the fact of his being a Christian. This gratuitous and unexpected insult greatly irritated the mind of Maximin and caused him to treat the Christians in consequence with the utmost severity. The pagans on the other hand were not slow in increasing his fury by attributing all manner of calamities to the believers. Storms, earthquakes, floods and plagues, were all alike their doing The dreadful visitations of this nature with which it pleased divine providence to visit the empire at this period were universally referred, as to their cause, to the

Christians. These guiltless persons had in consequence to bear the virulence and outrages of an indignant, affrighted and infuriated people. Every-where they were driven from their homes and necessitated to seek an asylum amongst strangers. St. Cyprian's description will give the reader the best idea of what the faithful had to suffer at this time: "About twenty-two years after the death of Alexander, calamities of all kinds afflicted the world in general, and the Christians in particular; frequent earthquakes shook Cappadocia and Pontus. Numbers of edifices were destroyed, whole villages disappeared in the bowels of the earth. These catastrophes brought on the Christian name a violent persecution which, bursting forth after the pleasure of so prolonged a peace, was as terrible and crushing as the calamity was unforeseen. We had then as governor of province Serenianus, a cruel and implacable persecutor. A great fright seized upon the brethren: they fled hither and thither before the storm. They abandoned their houses and their country in order to seek an asylum elsewhere, for this persecution being only local left them the hope of finding elsewhere a refuge."

The same, if not greater, afflictions, the Christians of Alexandria were made to endure. But these dreadful calamities that were thus falling upon the Church, were not without their advantage. Origen, the illustrious champion of the faith in the east, having withdrawn from the heat of the persecution, retired to Cæsarea. There, by his great learning and logical reasoning, he succeeded in winning back from Valentianism, the future illustrious bishop of Milan. Ambrose, having been apprehended a little while after, was conveyed into Germany, and was dragged in the emperor's suite from town to town. But this refinement of cruelty by which the tyrant sought to discredit Christianity at large, became the occasion, under divine provi-

dence, of securing to the Church so precious a leader. For the people incensed at the outrage offered to religion in the personal treatment of Ambrose, rose in masses against the emperor wherever he went, so that he was quickly compelled to remove the insult and to leave the Christians at peace.

The time was now arrived when it pleased divine providence to visit this tyrant with the just chastisement of his offenses against religion. Hated and despised, even by his own, the whole empire rose against his authority. In May of the year 237, the African province revolted, and proclaimed in his stead, the two Gordians, father and son, as emperors. Before he had time to proceed in person to quell this rebellion, the newly appointed emperors were got out of the way ; but the senate still bent upon a change, appointed in their stead Maximin and Balbinus. These in turn were forced to name as Cæsar a relative of the Gordians. Maximin, who was at this time in Germany, hastened back with all despatch to Italy, and after passing the Alps, proceeded to lay siege to Aquileia. After several unsuccessful attempts to reduce the place, his troops finally lost confidence in him, and broke out into revolt. This left the situation in the hands of the pretorian guard, who, hastening to the emperor's quarters, slew, in cold blood, this enemy of God and man, the murderer of his own father, and one of the great persecutors of holy Church.

From the death of Severus, A. D. 211, till the accession of Decius, A. D. 249, the Church enjoyed a period of great repose, except during times of popular commotion and the two last years of the reign of Maximin. During those eight and thirty years religion made wonderful progress, and produced some very remarkable men. Amongst those were Cyprian of Carthage, Denys of Alexandria, Gregory

Thaumaturgus, Alexander of Jerusalem and the world famed Origen. But the very cause that operated so favorably at first in behalf of divine truth, in spreading the faith, wrought in the end numerous deplorable evils. The profound peace which the Church enjoyed, served to corrupt the morals of the faithful, to tarnish the lustre of their faith and to introduce into the hearts of all, clergy and laity, a covetous, worldly-minded spirit as unworthy of the followers of Christ as it was opposed to the teachings of divine truth. Indeed, only we are assured by one who lived at the time and witnessed the acts of which he complains, we could hardly accept the statement of the excesses into which the faithful and their pastors had fallen at that epoch. But vouched for by such an authority as Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, we are reluctantly compelled to accept it as true. "The sweets of a long peace altered in our hands the purity of the law. Divine vengeance is come to awaken our languishing, I was going to say, dead faith. Our faults invoked a terrible chastisement. But the divine mercy has so softened these calamities, that all that has happened appears less a persecution than a trial. Every one tries to increase his patrimony, forgetful of the noble devotion to the ancient faith, and what it ought to constantly produce. All dragged by an insatiable cupidity, hasten after gold. No more religious zeal in the priest! No more faith in the minister of the Lord! No more charity in works, no more restraint in morals! Man degrading the majesty of his countenance, and woman covering her cheeks with hypocritical paint—the work of God thus shamefully travestied—the hair dyed, snairs adroitly laid for innocence, cunning every-where circumventing simplicity; marriage contracted with infidels; the members of Christ shamefully prostituted to pagans; rash oaths, base perjuries, a high disdain for authority, poisoned mouths vomiting forth im-

precations, unrelenting hatred, divisions in families! What more shall I say? Bishops, who should be every-where models and patterns of virtue, bartering sacred for profane things, abandoning their dioceses and their flocks, running from province to province, watching the public markets where they might find the richest benefices, amassing treasures while hunger is in the Church, hunger amongst their brethren; appropriating inheritances by low trickery, increasing their capital by usury—this is what we have seen!"

Making every allowance for a fervid imagination, rhetorical expressions and a sensitive mind alive to everything affecting the interests of the Church, the picture here presented to the reader, it must be acknowledged, is deplorable enough. How a single generation could have produced such a reaction in the lives and morals of the faithful, it is difficult to conceive. But that such was the actual condition of affairs, at least in the eastern Church, we cannot reasonably doubt, vouched for, as it is, by a bishop and a saint.

Under such circumstances the great enemy of mankind naturally beheld his opportunity. A more favorable one could not be presented, for destroying the Church of Christ. The people were remiss: their morals were lax, their faith weak, their hearts corrupted and almost wholly fixed on earth and earthly things; while on the other hand, the pastors and guardians of the faith were alike culpable. What more favorable moment for overthrowing the Church of God!

Decius, that "execrable animal," as he is styled by Lactantius, mounted the throne, A. D. 249. Almost simultaneously with his accession to the purple, the Christians learned of his edicts against the religion, and his determination to abolish Christianity from the face of the earth. It

is needless to enquire, why he was prompted to this diabolical resolve. The evil one is ever ready to supply reasons to the wicked-minded in their antagonism against the Church. The immediate object of the persecution was to make the Christians apostatize, a result which in many instances, was unhappily accomplished, as we shall presently see. The edict having been read in the pretorian camp, and affixed to the capitol, was afterwards despatched through the empire, to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces. The work of blood was commenced by slaughtering the leaders in the Church. Decius would pull down the Christian edifice by removing its props, but he forgot that the foundation on which the entire superstructure reposed, was Christ himself, the immovable rock of ages. Death or apostasy was to be the fate of all; not a swift and instantaneous death, but a painful, lingering one, for the latter was deemed more efficacious in overcoming the constancy of the believers. And such, indeed, the artifice proved to be, for many, who would have readily yielded up their lives for the cause of Christ, had a speedy death been offered them, unhappily failed under a prolongation of their torments, and ended by renouncing their holy profession. Many too, at the very sight of their torments, gave way and apostatized. Little else could be expected under the circumstances. The long peace, as we have seen, had corrupted the hearts of the believers; their minds were turned from virtue, and fixed more on the things of earth than upon those of heaven. The faith had lost its original purity in their regard, while the very suddenness of the edicts left them little or no time to reflect on the part they should take. On the other hand, the rage and violence of their enemies knew no bounds, and respected no condition. Extreme youth, as well as extreme age, became equally victims. Many, indeed, fled before the storm, but in doing so,

they only prolonged their misfortunes, for in all places, whithersoever they directed their flight, they encountered their enemies. Of the great number that fell and shamefully apostatized, the reader will be able to form a judgment from this: "Some of our brethren," writes the holy doctor, St. Cyprian, "have not awaited the hand of the lictor, to be led to the capitol. Overcome in the combat, cast down before the assault, they have not even had the poor excuse of having sacrificed to the idols by constraint. We have seen them running, of their own accord, to the public place, rushing furiously to their spiritual death, as if to satisfy an ardent impatience, or to profit by an occasion which they ardently desired for some time." He then goes on to state, how the very children were dragged by their parents before the magistrates and made to apostatize by offering incense to the idols. The cause of such weakness, the holy doctor accounts for in these words: "Here, my brethren, instead of dissimulating the truth, let us expose the cause of our fall. A blind attachment to the goods of this world, has seduced the greater part. Fatal riches! Behold the chains that have bound their feet, which have arrested their progress, overcome their faith, captivated their spirits and closed their understanding. Behold, how by identifying one's self with the joys of the world, one becomes the food of the serpent which has been condemned by divine power, to eat of the earth."

St. Denys of Alexander, another contemporary, gives an equally deplorable account of the weakness of the Christians under his charge, in resisting the power of the tyrant. To riches he also attributes the weakness and downfall of many. "Terror spreads every-where," says this candid witness, "among the faithful. It seized at first upon those who by their great wealth and exalted dignity, made a considerable figure in the world. These were the first who

yielded. They were those too, who on account of the unfortunate relations they held with the prince in the matter of public affairs, saw themselves, as it were, forced to yield to him a base compliance. Others, unable to resist the prayers of their friends, and the solicitation of their relatives, allowed themselves to be dragged to the altars of the idols. Some brought there a countenance pale and dejected, and although they appeared to be resolved not to sacrifice, yet were so weak and undecided, that it might be thought they had come for that purpose, so that one could hardly help smiling, in seeing them so undecided as to whether they should die or sacrifice. Others presented themselves without difficulty or embarrassment, while several, to save appearances, offered incense to the idols, protesting loudly that they had never been Christians. In fine, a vast number yielded shamefully, several took flight, but of these, some were arrested. Of the latter, there were those who had the courage to suffer only imprisonment and chains, but who gave way on beholding the countenance of the judge; others again, who held out under the first tortures, but who gave way when these came to be redoubled."

This is a deplorable picture of the weakness of the Christians of that time. Happily for the honor and dignity of Christianity it is somewhat relieved by another passage in the writings of the same author. After enumerating several instances of persons who endured the greatest of torments and died heroically for the faith, he says: "Who now could say how many of the faithful perished during this persecution either in the desert or the mountains, from hunger and thirst and cold and nakedness? Robbers and beasts have deprived them of the life they sought to save from the persecutors. And if some of these have escaped so many enemies by a particular providence, they have been reserved only to publish the victories of these generous

combatants who without such witnesses would remain buried in the obscurity of the forest." And in a letter to Domitius and Didymus he also says: "It is needless to give you the names of the martyrs. They are in great number, but none is known to you. It is sufficient for you to understand in general that they have tormented without regard to age, sex, or rank, men and women, young and old, soldier and civilian; that all felt the rage of the persecutor and experienced the whips, the iron and fire which were brought into use against them. . . . . For the prefect gives no quarter to any who fall into his hands, cruelly depriving some immediately of life, inflicting upon others the most horrible tortures and confining others still in dark and noisome prisons."*

During the course of the persecution several timid, worldly-minded Christians unwilling to apostatize and yet not sufficiently courageous to die for the faith, had recourse to an expediency which, in their eyes, would save them from both. On paying a certain amount, they received from the magistrates a certificate attesting their compliance with the law and of their having sacrificed to the idols. Such an unworthy subterfuge was entirely insufficient to save them from the horrible crime that they sought to avoid. Hence the words of St. Cyprian: "Let not those consider themselves less dispensed from penance who, though not having soiled their hands with the horrible sacrifice, have still profaned no less their conscience by perjured documents." And in another place: "Ah, how often have I not preferred the faith and salutary fears of those who, without carrying in their hands the attestation of their apostasy, but having the thought merely in their minds, come with simplicity to repentance to open their consciences to the priest of the Lord."

What was most to be deplored at this time was the occasional fall of some of the higher dignitaries of the Church.

* See Eusebius, book vi, chap. 41.

Thus the apostasy of Endemon, bishop of Smyrna, and his having sacrificed to the idols, gave a great shock to the faithful; but this was partly redeemed by the noble and courageous conduct of Pione, a priest of the same place, who gloriously died for the faith.*

When the imperial edicts arrived at Carthage in Africa, the pro-consul, Fortunatus, was absent. To the inferior magistrates in consequence fell the task of executing the emperor's commands. But as these had not the power of passing sentence of death, the only length they could go was to cause the arrest and imprisonment of the faithful. They accordingly had arrested and cast into dungeons great numbers of the believers, several of whom perished from want, confinement, the foulness of the air and the intolerable heat of their prisons. The more fortunate were banished from their homes, their goods and lands being confiscated. Of these several betook themselves to Rome, and were aided by the brethren there according to their limited means.

At the commencement of the persecution, St. Cyprian retired from Carthage in order the better to provide for the wants of the Church. It was not fear that induced him to take this step, as his entire subsequent conduct sufficiently proved, but that he might render greater services to the cause of religion. He knew the need that the Church then had of a guide and ruler. Such was his renown for wisdom and prudence that he was eagerly consulted by many from divers parts and his opinion solicited even by Rome; while on the other hand his letters and encouragements were oftentimes exceedingly opportune and salutary in assisting his brethren in their contest with the tyrant.

The pro-consul arrived in Carthage in the month of April, when the work of slaughter commenced. The prisons were already full, and no delay was needed in order to

*See Belouino, vol. ii.

obtain the victims. They were already under the executioner's hand. A simple sentence of Cyprian is sufficient to indicate the nature of the Christians, sufferings at this date: "The blood flowed in a great stream, in order to extinguish the flames of the persecution." After fifteen months the storm had spent itself and Cyprian was at liberty to return to his see. But the trouble was not yet at an end. The sword of persecution was still drawn against the faithful. The abuses, however, which had begun to appear and which demanded of Cyprian the greatest exertions to remove, caused him still greater anxiety. These were of a character calculated to tarnish the purity of the faith. It was customary then at the instance of those who had suffered for the faith, to remit in favor of penitents, some of the canonical penances enjoined by the Church. To this end remissions in the form of indulgences were granted by the bishops. So questionable a practice soon grew into a serious abuse. Lucien a certain confessor, outstripping all moderation, distributed unreservedly to all who applied to him, canonical pardons. Such an imprudent assumption of authority and an invasion, so to speak, of the rights and privileges of the episcopate well-nigh led to the most deplorable consequences. Another evil and of still greater magnitude demanded the labor, the zeal and ability of Cyprian at that time for its extinction. It was an error the opposite to that upheld by Lucien. Novatus a turbulent priest had embraced the errors of Novatian and taught that the Church was unable to grant any indulgence to those who had fallen; that sins committed after baptism could not be remitted and that the sacred rite of confirmation was not a sacrament. Both these errors received their merited condemnation at the hands of Cyprian and the power for evil of those who advocated them was in consequence greatly diminished.

During the course of the year 251, Decius quitted Rome and hastened to the banks of the Danube to oppose the barbarous Goths who then for the first time invaded the empire. His attention being thus diverted from the unoffending Christians to a powerful and dangerous enemy, the heat of the persecution somewhat subsided. But it required the death of the tyrant to relieve the believers entirely from their sufferings. Near Philippopolis in Thrace, Decius came up with the enemy, but suffered an ignoble defeat. The victory on the part of the Goths was owing mainly to strategy, the Romans being surprised and attacked while entirely unprepared. Still worse was the fate reserved for them a little later on. On returning from the capture of Philippopolis the Goths were encountered and surrounded by their recently defeated adversary. All chance of retreat or advance being removed, it became a question of victory or death. They would willingly have relinquished their booty if permitted to retire, but the hereditary spirit of the Romans and their resolve to wipe out the disgrace of their recent defeat, prevented the emperor listening to any accommodations. It was accordingly a combat of despair on the one hand, and of the utmost determination and national pride on the other. The conflict would in all probability have proved disastrous to the Goths, only for the accident of the situation which was entirely in their favor. A swamp lay between the combatants; this the Romans attempting to cross, lost their footing and speedily became a prey to their enemy. The emperor sank in the morass and his body was never discovered. Thus perished by an inglorious death, in a mud hole, another of the great enemies of the Christian religion.

Upon the arrival of the news of Decius' death, the senate conferred the title of emperor on his son, Hostilius, a youth who had not yet arrived at his majority. Gallus, an experi-

enced general, was appointed his guardian and made joint-partner with him in his powers. But the union did not continue very long, for Hostilius died the same year, after a short reign of a few months. His death was attributed to the plague which then devastated the empire; but there were those who attributed it to Gallus. His weakness in making a shameful compact with the enemy, by permitting him to retain all his booty and stipulating to pay him an annual tribute, gave occasion to the worst suspicions in his regard. An agreement being thus come to between the contending powers, Gallus took the way to Rome. The period occupied in the march covered the space of a few months and this gave the Christians a respite from their sufferings. But it was only the calm that preceded the storm, for, arrived at the capital and firmly seated on the throne, Gallus immediately adopted the policy of his predecessor. He set to persecuting the religion. He persecuted the very men whose prayers were constantly addressed to the Almighty for his safety and the prosperity of his empire. Hence, as St. Denys expresses it, he persecuted the prayers that were offered up in his behalf. The plea in this instance for proceeding against the faithful was the old insensate one of the anger of the gods. For some time a cruel plague had been devastating the empire: entire villages had almost wholly disappeared. The army was considerably reduced; every-where terror and alarm had spread over the empire. The Christians of course were at the bottom of the whole of it; they were the cause of the disasters and, unless something were speedily done, the whole country would be depopulated. It is not difficult to imagine how heated the popular imagination became, when occupied by such an idea. The most natural thing, under the circumstances, was that the pagans should set themselves to appeasing their choleric deities. Gallus, accord-

ingly ordered that sacrifice should be offered by all throughout the empire. The order was first attempted to be carried into effect at Rome, where the Christians in common with the pagans were imperatively commanded to appease the divinities by oblations offered at their shrines. True however to their holy profession and in a manner worthy of the most heroic soldiers of the Cross, they resolutely refused to comply. Cornelius, who was then sovereign pontiff, was banished from the capital and beheaded, it is thought, at Civita Vecchia. The Roman clergy and people, in his absence, gave the most brilliant testimony to the faith, which reminds one very strongly of the conduct of those who, as we have seen above, when called upon to abandon the truth, unanimously presented themselves in a body before the governor of the place, declaring their readiness to die rather than to be false to their holy profession. The following letter from Cyprian to Cornelius is abundant evidence of this: "Cyprian to Cornelius health! We have learned well-beloved brother, the glorious testimony of your faith and the firmness of your confession. The joy which we have experienced thereat seems to associate us in your victory. United as we are by indissoluble bonds, those of the Church, of concord and affection, where is the bishop that would not rejoice at the happiness of a brother bishop as if it were his own? Where is the brother who would not unite his joy with the joy of his brother? Words fail me to express the transports of joy which were experienced here when the news of your courage arrived: when we learned that you went *at the head of your brethren* to confess the name of Jesus Christ, and that thus their glory had increased still more the glory of their chief. Herald of their glory, you have produced numerous companions of glory. In confessing God, in the face of a great people, you have begotten a nation of confessors, so that we know

not what to celebrate the most—the ardor and firmness of your faith, or the love which enchained the faithful by your noble example. The bishop has exhibited his heroism in throwing himself first into the combat; the flock has proved its tender and inviolate charity in treading in the footprints of the pastor. Thanks to this touching unanimity of heart and of voice, the Roman Church *has risen united to confess Jesus Christ.* . . . . Your union, your charity, your vigor are become an impressive lesson for all the faithful. You have taught them to fear God, and to attach themselves closely to Jesus Christ; you have taught the faithful to range themselves in the hour of danger around their bishop: you have taught the brethren not to detach themselves during the tempest, because union is strength, and because the God of peace grants to the humble souls whatsoever they demand in common," etc.

On the death of Cornelius, Lucian, a Roman priest, was elected his successor. He, too, was exiled for the faith, but after some time was enabled to return, and died a natural death. To him also on his return from exile, St. Cyprian addressed a letter of congratulation: "Cyprian and his colleague to their brother Lucian health!—It is only recently, well-beloved brother, that we have congratulated you on the double honor which the divine mercy accorded you, in giving in your person as chief, to the Church a bishop and confessor. To-day we congratulate you no less—you, your companions, and all our brethren, on account of the protection which the Lord has extended to you, in bringing you back amongst his own, crowned with the same glory as on the day of your departure. The pastor has been restored to the sheep, the pilot to the helm, the leader to the love of his people. It is clear that in permitting your exile, the design of God was not that the Church should remain long separated from

him in a state of widowhood, but that the bishop should reappear in the Church greater and more honored. In effect is the martyrdom of the three youths of Babylon less remarkable, because frustrating death, they came forth safe and sound from the furnace. Did Daniel lose any of his glory because, cast as a prey to the teeth of the lions, the protection of the Lord saved him for his glory? Now, the postponement of martyrdom far from weakening the confessors, the merit of their triumph only manifests the the wonders of the divine power. You reproduce before our eyes the devotion (self-sacrifice) of these three generous and illustrious youths when they declared to the impious king that they were ready to be burned in the flames rather than serve his god or adore the images he had made. Nevertheless, the God which they adored and which we also adore, was able to withdraw them from the devouring furnace, and to deliver them from the hands of the king. Like courage was there in your confession, like protection on the part of God. You were disposed to accept the most cruel torture, but the Lord has spared you in order to preserve you for his Church."

Of the great number that suffered at this time and the cruelties they were made to undergo, the acts of Hippolytus, a Roman priest, bear ample testimony. Speaking of the departure of the prefect of Rome for the provinces with a view of persecuting the faithful, Prudentius says: "That cruel man departed on that day from Rome in order to carry terror to the neighboring towns, his presence being as a plague desolating whithersoever he passed. For not content with having filled the capital of the world with slaughter and carnage, and having intoxicated the soil which its lofty walls enclosed with the blood of the innocent, seeing the janiculum, the palace, the tribune flowing with blood, his rage burst forth along the banks of

the Tuscan sea, and the environs even of Porte Loman felt its effects. He was to be seen seated on an elevated tribunal surrounded by his executioners. A false zeal for the glory of his god, devoured him, and his entire ambition was to make faithless the faithful disciples of Christ. There were troops of Christians that he caused to be brought into his presence. The prisons whence they came forth had impressed upon their countenances, covered with filth, all its horrors, and they bore upon their persons the sad and deplorable marks of long suffering. There, then, was heard the horrible noise of the chains, which these condemned innocents dragged along, mixed with the sound of the whips and the lashes (leathern straps) armed with lead and iron, the redoubled blows of which beating the air caused it apparently to compassionate by its sound the suffering of the victims. The iron crooks made large holes in the sufferers' sides and carried their deadly points even to the bowels. The executioners felt their strength exhausted, but the rage of the judge received only additional impetus. He stormed with fury in seeing his efforts unavailing and his cruelty useless, for he *did not find any of so many servants of Christ who showed the least sign of weakness.*"

While the Christians were thus giving evidence to their faith in the most noble and heroic manner in Italy, their brethren in Africa were proving themselves equally worthy of their holy profession. By the mouth of their bishop they defied all the power of their tormentors and reproached them with the worship of senseless idols. "It does not suffice for you, O Demetrian," cries out Cyprian, "not to honor our God; you do not desire that any should honor him. He who bows before dumb idols, before images, cut by the hand—what do I say, whoever prostrates himself before impure monsters you have as a friend. Pyres loaded with victims, smoke every-where in your temples and

the true God has no altar, or at least none but in secret. The crocodile, the cynocephalus, the serpent, the stones themselves—all is god. But the true God is not God or cannot be adored with impunity," &c.

Gallus had now reigned two years, but the measure of his iniquity was filled up. Divine providence struck him down as it did all his persecuting predecessors. In 253 he found a competitor to the throne in the person of Emilien, one of his generals. This commander after overcoming the Goths, had himself proclaimed emperor. Gallus advanced to meet him, but the troops proving inferior, after slaying Gallus and his sons, joined with the enemy and declared Emilien emperor. Thus fell at the hands of his own soldiers another of the enemies of God's holy religion.

CHAPTER XV.

VALERIAN BECOMES EMPEROR—AT FIRST HE TREATS THE CHRISTIANS KINDLY—FROM BEING A PROTECTOR HE BECOMES A PERSECUTOR—HE ISSUES AN EDICT AGAINST THE FAITHFUL—MARTYRDOM OF ST. LAWRENCE AT ROME—CYPRIAN IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH—HIS LAST ADDRESS TO HIS FLOCK—HIS DEATH—THE NUMBERS THAT DIED FOR THE FAITH AT THAT TIME IN AFRICA—MARTYRDOM OF FRUCTUEUX, BISHOP OF TARAGONA—MARTYRDOM OF SATURNINUS, BISHOP OF TOULOUSE—VALERIAN IS PUNISHED FOR HIS CRIMES—THE EMPIRE IS DEVASTATED BY PESTILENCE AND WAR—VALERIAN FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF THE PERSIANS—HE IS TREATED WITH THE UTMOST INDIGNITY, AND FINALLY BEHEADED AND FLAYED.

When Emilien manifested his pretentions to the empire, Valerian was despatched by Gallus to bring back the legions of Gaul and Germany. They arrived too late, for Emilien was already in possession of the empire for four months; but that was the entire of his reign. His camp was still on the plains of Spoletto, where he had been saluted emperor; but the troops were on his side only as long as no more powerful aspirant appeared. Alarmed at the strength of Valerian's forces, the army that had lately saluted Emilien emperor, now basely deserted his standard, imbrued their hands in his blood, and joined the camp of his enemy. Valerian accordingly became emperor by the unanimous consent of all. The first part of his reign was most favorable to the Christians. None of his predecessors had treated the disciples of Christ with the same indulgence. He not only did not persecute, but even extended to them many marks of favor. His palace became their home, and from the great numbers occupying positions therein and

the regularity of their lives, it might be regarded more as a Christian community than a pagan emperor's residence. For four years, till the commencement of the year 257, this happy state of affairs continued. At that date an entire change occurred in Valerian's conduct towards the Christians. He became as hostile to them as he had been favorable. From all offices and appointments they were dismissed and debarred, none being any longer retained around his person. This sudden change in the emperor's affections is to be attributed to the counsels of a certain magician named Marcion, who obtained an entire mastery over his master's mind. This man aspired to the empire himself, being assured of success, it is affirmed, by the demon, and in gratitude, exerted himself in raising a persecution against the faithful. It would be impossible, on any other ground than the influence of a confidant, to account for the sudden and entire change that came over Valerian's affections. Once under the influence of Marcion nothing was more natural than to persecute the faithful, for the practices followed by the magician were directly opposed to the purity of the Christian religion and condemned thereby.* This persecution commenced in the year 256. The pope, St. Stephen, and Hippolytus, a Roman citizen, were amongst the first to fall victims to it. Whether any general edict was issued in this year, is not very certain, but that such a document emanated from the emperor the following year, is attested by St. Cyprian, who informs us that the emperor's orders to the pro-consul of Africa, were to the effect, that all should immediately conform to the religion of Rome. The ordinance was especially directed against the bishops and clergy, but was

* Marcion taught the existence of two principles or gods, one good and the other bad. He rejected the old Testament, because being given by the bad principle.—See History of the Heresies, by St. Liguori, p. 40.

by no means confined to their ranks. A vast number of others of all ages, sexes and conditions, were also made victims.* To encourage the faithful to persevere in their holy resolve and to triumph over the enemy, St. Cyprian, at the prayer of Fortunatus, wrote his exhortation to martyrdom. It was written before the edicts arrived, and was intended as a preventative against the storm that was about to burst over that part of the Church. In it he says: "The enemy against whom we have to struggle has grown old in the contest. Four thousand years have already elapsed since the demon has made war on man. Time and experience have taught him the strategies by which he is to invest us, and the violence by which he may overcome us. Woe to the soldier of Christ who finds himself badly prepared, incapable, unwatchful and not on the alert." The exhortation was most seasonable, it came at the needed moment, it sustained many a drooping spirit and infused courage and determination into the body of the faithful at large. The result was that thousands suffered generously for the faith. It was not fit that one who had been the means of obtaining the glorious crown of martyrdom for so many, should himself be deprived of so signal an honor. Hitherto in the dispensations of divine providence, the life of the great bishop had been spared for the good of his people. In the east and the west, his words were listened to, with the profoundest respect and attention, by thousands. Numbers were encouraged to brave and set at nought the dangers and torments that threatened them, by his seasonable and animating words. Few, if any, have ever acted so nobly and effectively, the part of a guide, a counsellor and a prop to the faithful in the hour of desolation, than Cyprian, the illustrious bishop of Carthage. It was only fit, then, that he who had encouraged so many to die for

* Vide epistolam Cypriani ad Demetrium.

the faith, should himself also give his life for divine truth. He was first exiled to Curule. The night following his arrival there, which was probably the 15th of September, he was divinely admonished, in a vision, of his approaching death. A year elapsed and Cyprian was still in exile. During this time the greater part of the bishops, priests and deacons of the pro-consulate were either put to death or banished from their homes. Nine of the seventy bishops who had sat in the council of Carthage for the condemnation of Novatian, together with several priests and deacons, were shut up in the mines. To these St. Cyprian wrote an encouraging address, in which he expresses the delight it would give him were it possible to visit them in their confinement, and he exhorts them most earnestly to persevere to the end in their noble profession of faith. "You have commenced to proclaim your faith," says he, "under the rods which tore your bodies into rags; but these glorious beginnings have nothing of which we are to be ashamed. The Christian does not fear the cudgel raised to tear his flesh; his hope is entirely in the wood. The disciple of Christ discovers there the mysterious pledge of salvation. Formerly the instrument of redemption, to-day the instrument of victory, the wood which slays him carries him to eternal life." To these encouraging words the confessors, from the depths of their prisons, returned touching and grateful responses.

The edicts of the emperor being general and addressed to all the consular governments the persecution of the Christians was not confined to the part of the empire of which I have spoken. The Church of Alexandria suffered equally with that of Carthage and Rome. Under the consul Emilien, St. Denis the metropolitan of that ancient and remarkable see was apprehended and sent into exile. At his trial he answered his judge, who would have him aban-

don his faith, in the language of the Apostles: "It is better to obey God than man." The sentence passed upon him for refusing to comply with the orders of the emperor was that he be conducted to the interior of the Lybian Desert and thus completely removed from the society and assemblies of the Christians. At the same time it was strictly prohibited the Christians at Alexandria to assemble for worship or to betake themselves to the cemeteries for the purpose of prayer, an order which, it is hardly necessary to say, was entirely unheeded. The place of banishment whither the bishop was sent was not long without its inhabitants. Such was the fame and sanctity of the prelate and the love and attachment of his own for him as their spiritual father, that great numbers followed him into his exile several coming even from different parts of the country. Thus in a short time, as he himself assures us, the solitude became a flourishing Church, formed in part of the Christians who had followed him from Alexandria, and partly of those who hastened there from divers parts of Egpyt. Another remarkable result attended the venerable prelate's presence in that inhospitable region. The savage inhabitants who at first were so hostile in manner and sentiment became afterward so docile and so altered as in several instances to abandon their idolatrous worship and to become Christians. "Thus," says the saint, "we had the consolation of having made known to a people who had never understood it, the knowledge of the true God, of having first sowed the divine word in a land which till then had never been broken. But as God had sent us there only to carry the light of faith, as soon as we had acquitted ourselves of that duty, he transferred us elsewhere."

As soon as these matters became known to the consul he had the saint removed to another and more inhospitable

locality. In this manner he was kept in exile for the space of two years, till A. D. 260, when Valerian lost the empire. Two years previous, in the year 258, the persecution had assumed its greatest proportions. Valerian was then engaged in a war against the Persians and, with the view of propitiating the gods in favor of his cause, he dictated an order to the senate of Rome, commanding the extermination of the Christians or their submission to his will. As quoted by St. Cyprian, the wording of the edict was this: "The bishops, priests and deacons shall be immediately put to death. As to the senators, the knights and all the persons of rank, they shall be deprived of their goods and dignities. If after the first punishment they persevere in Christianity, they shall be condemned to capital punishment. The women of rank shall be sent into exile and stripped of their goods. All the officers of the palace who shall confess Christ shall be conducted, bound hands and feet, into the domains of the emperor."

At Rome the authorities were not slow in putting their master's ordinance into execution. Amongst the first to be arrested and condemned to death was Pope Sixtus II. He was seized with several of his priests and deacons while celebrating the divine mysteries in the cemetery of St. Calixtus. On the way to execution he was followed by his faithful deacon, Lawrence, who addressed him in the well-known plaintive terms: "Whither art thou going, my father, without your son? Whither art thou going, O holy Pontiff, without your deacon? You have not been accustomed to offer sacrifice without your minister. In what have I displeased you? Try if I am worthy of the choice you have made of me in making me the dispenser of the blood of our Lord." To this touching address the holy Pontiff answered: "I do not leave you, my son, but a great combat is reserved for you. . . . . you shall follow me in three days." St.

Lawrence being thus assured that his time on earth was limited set himself to distributing all the goods he had in his charge amongst the poor. Foreseeing that the cupidity of the authorities would impel them to confiscate the treasures of the Church, he immediately disposed of all in his keeping and distributed the proceeds to the poor. The amount was greater than might be expected from persons living on sufferance and of the humblest positions in life. But the zeal and liberality of the faithful supplied for the divine worship what under more favorable circumstances their worldly desires would have denied. The fact of this profuse distribution of the Church's emoluments coming to the knowledge of the pagan authorities, gave them an exaggerated idea of the wealth of the faithful and caused them to covet the more eagerly these imaginary treasures. It was the common opinion that the treasures of the Church were inexhaustible. Hence, summoning to his tribunal their faithful custodian, the holy St. Lawrence, the Roman governor demanded under pain of torture and death to be informed of where the remaining treasures were hidden. Employing at first a mild and conciliatory tone he addressed the holy deacon in these terms: "I am aware that you, Christians, complain of being treated with too much severity, and that little account is made of your lives. Cease your complaints about cruelty: you see with what gentleness I address you, and that I employ only entreaties to obtain what I might exact by violence. Correspond, then, to my kindness and give cheerfully what is politely demanded of you. It is said that your priests are accustomed to employ gold and silver vessels in their libations; that they receive in these the smoking blood of the victims, and that the places where your sacrifices are performed are lighted by a vast number of waxen torches placed in golden chandeliers. We are furthermore aware that the brethren (for it is said that you thus address each other,)

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have no greater pleasure than to strip themselves of their goods, to sell their farms and estates, and to carry the price to the feet of your Pontiff, and that the amount thus amassed is enormous. . . . I have been informed of the place where all these treasures are kept under lock and key. You are the depositary, you must give me the key and open those dark recesses where are concealed these mountains of gold and silver accumulated by such pernicious means, and by ways darker than the caverns wherein they are contained. *The state requires them, the public demands them, and the exhausted treasury awaits them* in order to furnish the expenses for the war, and to pay the soldiers for their services. Thus you shall accomplish to the letter one of your maxims which is to render to every one what is his due. The emperor demands only what is his: his image is on your gold and silver and has he not a right to take it back? Are you ignorant that one should render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar? Is not this even one of your dogmas: for if I mistake not, your God does not coin and I am not aware that he brought any bullion with him when he came upon earth? He was very rich in admirable discourse, but as to silver he had not much of it. Show the world that you practice what you preach and that your works are in accordance with your words. Be rich in maxims, I consent to that. Possess great treasures of sanctity, I don't envy you these; but rid yourselves of these corruptible treasures which are so unworthy of your attachment."

When the governor had ended this bantering rhodomontade, the saint ostensibly acquiesced in his demands, but requested some days to bring forth the coveted treasures. The governor's joy was at its height. Already did he speculate on the extent of the riches and the uses to which he would turn them. Meanwhile, the holy deacon was not inactive; he sought out and gathered together all

the poor, the lame, the blind and decrepit faithful in the capital. No one was better able to do this than he, for as chief almoner to his lately martyred master he was acquainted with all the abodes of poverty and all the haunts of misery in the city. Having assembled his afflicted charge he led them with all the evidence of misery and suffering under which they were laboring, before the doors of one of the churches. Next repairing to the presence of the governor he informed him of his readiness to fulfil his promise. Eager to obtain possession of the treasures which his imagination pictured to him as existing among the Christians and which his cupidity urged him to seize, he readily followed St. Lawrence. His soul was filled with delight, the anticipated view of the coveted riches made him forget everything else and created for him a momentary happiness to which he had ever been a stranger. Already visions of gold and silver goblets, chandeliers of great proportions and of the most precious material, rich and costly tapestry, and specie of enormous value passed before his mind. But these visions were only momentary, for when he reached the church and saw the poor, the halt and the blind, his joy was turned into rage and casting a glance of menacing enquiry on the saint he demanded why his authority had been contemned and why he had been so daringly slighted. "I have placed before your eyes," answered Lawrence, "the treasures of Christ. I give them into your hands and they fear neither violence, nor the sword, nor fire."

Beside himself with rage the governor ordered a fire to be immediately prepared and an iron grate placed thereon. In order that the element might not do its work too speedily, the flames were allowed to somewhat subside before the body of the saint was laid thereon. The object of the tyrant was to protract as much as possible the martyr's sufferings and to cause him to die by inches. But God

who gave St. Lawrence strength to profess openly his faith, gave him also strength to endure his tortures. It is beyond all doubt that the divine aid frequently came to the assistance of the martyrs and confessors, modifying in many instances their physical sufferings and causing them to be almost unconscious of what otherwise would have been excruciating tortures.

After the martyr had lain a considerable time in the position his executioners had placed him in, turning to his tormentors, he banteringly advised them to turn him as he was then sufficiently cooked on the one side. This being done and a considerable interval suffered to elapse, the saint again cried out in defiance: "You may eat me now and see whether the flesh of the Christian is better when roasted than raw." Then raising his eyes toward heaven he poured out a fervent prayer for Rome and its entire conversion to the faith of Christ after which he calmly expired in the Lord.

The death of Lawrence was the death-blow of paganism in the capital of the then civilized world. His prayer reached the throne of divine mercy and obtained the grace of conversion for thousands. From that date the temples of the gods and goddesses began to be entirely deserted. Libations were no longer so frequently and abundantly poured out to imaginary deities. The priests of Jupiter and Apollo tore from their brows the bandelets of silk which were the insignia of their office, and adorned with them the banner of the Cross and the altars of the Lord, while the consecrated vestals abandoned the care of the sacred fire in order to enroll themselves amongst the number of the chaste spouses of Christ.

"Mors illa sancti martyris,
Mors vera templorum fuit:
Tunc vesta palladios Lares,
Impune sensit deseri."

While St. Lawrence was being roasted in Rome, numbers of the faithful were burning in a furnace in Africa for a like cause. As soon as Valerius' orders, proscribing the Christians and condemning them to death or a renunciation of their holy religion, had arrived, the pro-consul Galerius immediately ordered a kiln to be lighted. At its mouth an altar was erected to the false gods, and the Christians were called upon to approach and offer the customary sacrifice or to cast themselves into the blazing furnace. Three hundred Christians accepted the fearful alternative and thus yielded up their lives in behalf of their faith. These were afterwards known under the title of the "white remains," on account of the lime with which their remains were mixed.

After this horrid proceeding the consul next directed his attention to the martyrdom of St. Cyprian. The holy bishop, who was then in prison in the vicinity of Carthage, becoming aware of Galerius' intentions, took occasion to address his last words of instruction to the clergy and people entrusted to his care: "Crypian to the priests, the deacons and all the people, health!—My dearly beloved brethren, on being informed that the lictors had been despatched to conduct me to the tribunal, some of my best friends counselled me to leave my gardens and seek another retreat. I have been obliged to yield to their just solicitations. It is fitter indeed that a bishop should confess the Lord in the city where he has governed the flock of Christ, and that the glory of his suffering should be made manifest to all the faithful. All that the bishop utters in this solemn moment and under the inspiration of God, it seems that the flock should also utter with him. Otherwise I should rob a Church so illustrious as yours of that legitimate honor which is its due, were the bishop of Carthage to receive the sentence of death at Letica, and were the martyr to take his flight from a strange city in order

to join the Lord. It shall not be so. My highest ambition, the object of my most fervent prayers is to testify to my God for you and for myself in the midst of you, to suffer death by your side and to pass from your arms into the arms of my merciful judge. Hence we tarry in the retreat where we are till the consul shall have returned to Carthage in order to learn from his mouth what the emperors have resolved upon against the Christians, laics or bishops, and to answer him then what the Lord shall put into our mouth. As for you, dearly beloved, faithful to the precepts of the gospel and to the instructions often reiterated by your pastor, be in peace; do not disturb the public tranquillity; abstain from all seditious movements; especially let no one offer himself voluntarily to persecution. There will be time enough to speak your sentiments if you happen to be discovered and handed over to the magistrates: for in that moment it is Jesus Christ who speaks in you, Jesus Christ who desires a generous confession and not an imprudent manifestation. If there be any measures of deliberation to be taken I hope that with the grace of God you will take them in common before the consul has pronounced the sentence against the confessor of Jesus Christ. May the Lord, dearly beloved, preserve you long to his Church."

Not long after this letter was written, the pro-consul, Galerius Maximus, arrived at Carthage, when the saint was summoned to his presence. After a futile attempt to get him to obey the emperor's orders, the consul pronounced his sentence in the following words: "We condemn the man called Thascius Cyprian to be beheaded." The Christians no sooner heard the sentence, than a cry arose from all—"We will go with him and die with him." In effect, they followed him to the place of execution, and would have deemed themselves only too happy to die with their bishop,

in so noble a cause. Arrived at the place of execution, Cyprian divested himself of his cloak, knelt for a moment, then rising presented five and twenty pieces of gold to his executioner, after which he offered his neck for the fatal blow. Another instant and his head rolled on the ground. Thus died on the 14th of September, 258, Cyprian the first bishop-martyr of the see of Carthage, and the greatest defender of the faith in that age. A few days later, his earthly judge followed him to answer for his crime before the tribunal of the Most High.

Shortly after the martyrdom of St. Cyprian, Lucian and his companions were arrested and cast into prison. They were condemned to be burned alive, but for some reason unknown, this resolution was abandoned, and they were sentenced to be beheaded. Their sufferings while in prison, awaiting the execution of the judgment, were excessive, caused chiefly by hunger and thirst. They were not, however, wholly abandoned. Heaven came to their aid and supported them in a miraculous manner, by the most consoling assurances. One of the number beheld in a vision, the whole of the party conducted to heaven, the way before them being brilliantly illuminated by a dazzling light. This the confessor understood to signify the Redeemer of mankind, who is the light of the world. Much more encouraging and sustaining still, was the actual presence of the Redeemer himself in their midst, who after assuring them that they had yet only a little to suffer, promised never to abandon them. "Don't be troubled," said he, "you have still a little to suffer; but have confidence in my power, I shall never abandon you, I shall be always with you."

At the end of several months of close confinement, during which they suffered all the inconveniencies and hardships arising from scanty food, fetid air, and brutal neglect, they were again summoned before the governor's tribunal

and they again boldly and generously testified to the faith. Their sentence was then ratified and they were ordered to be beheaded. On their way to execution they were accompanied by a large body of the faithful, to whom they addressed the most pathetic exhortations, reminding them of the littleness of time, the insignificance of the world, and the greatness of eternity. They took occasion, too, in their burning desire for the cause of divine truth, to inveigh strongly against the sins of idolatry and heresy. "Every one," cried one of the number, "who sacrifices to the false gods shall be exterminated; it is a terrible impiety to abandon the worship of the true God, for that of demons." Then directing his discourse to the sectaries, he said: "Open your eyes and by this multitude of martyrs, whom the Catholic Church daily begets, recognize it as true. Abandon your schism and error, and return to the Church." In these admirable sentiments of faith and charity, continued to the last, did these glorious champions of divine truth go forth to receive the crown of immortal glory that awaited them.

The governor's rage was not yet appeased. According to his instructions messengers were now despatched to the capital of Numidia to seize and bring before his tribunal at Lambare, all the Christians that could be found in that province. A large number of the faithful were accordingly arrested and despatched to the governor; but were not immediately placed upon trial in consequence of the vast numbers of Christians of the place that were being continuously executed. When these were despatched the governor's attention was next directed to the newly arrived. They were not martyred in the city. After various fruitless attempts had been made to get them to apostatize, they were ultimately led to the bank of a river at a distance and drawn up in a line for execution.

The object was that the bodies might be carried away with the stream and the necessity of an interment avoided. Along the bank for a considerable distance the deed of blood was accomplished, for so great was the number, that if the bodies of all were cast in in a heap at a given point, the course of the river would be impeded. During the execution of the sentence, many edifying scenes were witnessed, but none more touching than the parting of St. Macrion with her son. Being present though not of the number of the condemned, that noble-hearted matron like another Machabee earnestly exhorted her son to persevere in his generous resolve and to avoid a shameful apostasy. When every thing was ready the victims' eyes were bandaged, and at that moment, by divine illumination, they beheld the numerous evils with which God was about to avenge their death. Future events proved the truth of their predictions, which were accurately fulfilled in the reign of Galerius.

The edict of Valerian being general and addressed to the governors of all the provinces, like painful proceedings were enacted against the Christians in other parts of the empire. Historic details, it is true, are not extant to inform us of all that transpired, but sufficient is at hand to establish satisfactorily the fierce character of the persecution all through the empire. Thus on the 21st of January, 259, the Iberian province was honored by the death of its first martyrs, Fructueux, bishop of Taragona, with his deacons, Augurus and Eulogius, who were burned to death by order of the governor, Emilien. While the holy martyrs were being conducted to the place of execution, the people gave expression to their grief in an abundance of tears. Even the pagans wept with sorrow, so greatly was the bishop esteemed. But nothing could arrest the governor's orders. When about to enter the arena, turning to the

faithful, the holy prelate addressed them in these consoling words: "Our Lord, dear brethren, will not leave you without a pastor: he is faithful to His promises and His goodness will never cease to be favorable to you. Let not my present condition trouble you. One hour of suffering passes exceedingly quick." Having spoken thus, he ascended the fatal pyre, accompanied by his faithful deacons, and thus consummated a glorious life, the sanctity of which was abundantly demonstrated by the numerous miracles which immediately happened. On the following night what remained of the bodies was taken charge of by the Christians and reverentially interred.

About the same time, Saturninus, first bishop of Toulouse also died for the faith. This holy, old man had great power over the demons. They were habitually silent in his presence, and unable to return any responses to their deluded adorers of whom there were vast numbers, for that section of the country was still almost exclusively pagan. The Christians were few and their religion ignored. Pagan rites and ceremonies were every-where practised; the false gods were worshipped in every hamlet and grove; their altars smoked with the burning flesh of the victims offered in their honor; while the blood of the victims immolated in their service, was every-where lavishly spilt. To break down this horrible state of impiety, and to enlighten those millions that were thus sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, the bishop set himself vigorously to work. Such were his apostolic endeavors that his presence alone was enough to impose silence on the demons. The following is illustrative of the power he exerted in this manner. Being accustomed to pass daily before the principal pagan edifice of the city in order to reach a little church where he was wont to offer the divine sacrifice, the false deities, to the astonishment of the pagan priests, be-

came habitually dumb. Not knowing at the outset to what to attribute their silence, the ministers of the temple, with the view of propitiating them, offered great numbers of victims; but in vain, for the demons were still silent. Understanding at length that another religion had arisen whose entire efforts were directed to the destruction of the worship of the immortal gods, and that Saturninus was chief therof, the rage of the unbelievers was accordingly boundless and immediately directed against the faithful, and especially against the bishop. While in this state of frantic excitement, and vainly attempting to propitiate their dumb deities, Saturninus happened to pass by the place. It was an unpropitious moment, for the very sight of him aroused the worst passions of the populace. "Behold," cried they, "the enemy of the gods. It is he who preaches every-where against our religion, who seeks to destroy our temples. It is he who has caused our idols to be silent, and unable to return any answers. The gods have propitiously delivered him into our hands, and it is now plainly our duty to avenge the wrong he has done us. He must then either give them his life as an offering, or appease them by incense." Having spoken thus, the people rushed tumultuously on the holy bishop, dragged him before the idols and endeavored to make him apostatize. To their repeated demands to sacrifice to the gods, he answered: "I adore but one God, who is the only and true deity, and to him alone am I prepared to offer victims of praise. As for your gods they are only demons. How can I fear them who, as you see yourselves, tremble before me."

Instead of opening the eyes of the multitude to their real situation, these words served only to inflame them the more, and so attaching the saint by a cord to the bull they had prepared for the sacrifice, they gave the animal its liberty, and goading it on, caused the almost instantan-

eous death of the saint. The infuriated beast continued to drag after it the lifeless remains of the martyr, until the cord by which it was attached, finally parted and the body remained in the way. It was taken charge of by a couple of matrons who rendered it all the honors of a Christian burial.

The foregoing and other like enormities prepared the way for the downfall of Valerian. The measure of his iniquity was fast filling up; the sword of the Lord was already drawn from the scabbard, and it only awaited the moment when the hand of the divine vengeance would allow it to fall. It was not long till it did. Valerian lost the empire, his honor and his life. All the terrible evils that the martyrs of Numidia had prophesied were now at hand. God in his wrath, scourged the entire nation for the enormities perpetrated on his servants. He poured out the vials of his anger on the land in the shape of plague, pestilence, war and famine. In Rome and around, as many as five thousand persons a day were carried out of existence. A preternatural darkness in some places overspread the land, while terrible earthquakes accompanied by most lugubrious sounds sapped the foundations of dwellings and caused them to tumble into ruins. So great was the alarm that several died of affright. But these were not the only evils that fell upon the empire. Still more injurious and alarming were the devastations caused by plundering, barbaric hordes which then every-where precipitated themselves on the empire, carrying ruin and devastation whithersoever they went. In the east, Sapor, at the head of his victorious Persians, rushed down upon Syria and Mesopotamia, sacked and ruined Antioch, and advanced even to the walls of Cæsarea. To check his victorious advance, Valerian set out from Rome, and hastened to meet his adversary. For a time success was equally divided between the combat-

ants, but the Roman emperor being betrayed by, it is thought, Marcion, was completely defeated with the loss of a great part of his army. He subsequently became a prisoner in the hands of the Persian monarch, and was treated with the utmost indignity. Instead of casting him into prison, or having him beheaded, as the instinct of barbarity might suggest, he reserved him for a greater measure of suffering, as a subject on which to constantly exercise his detestation of the Romans. Dragging him from place to place, whithersoever he went, he subjected him to the horrible indignity of making him his footstool whenever he entered his chariot. Sapor on these occasions stepped from Valerian's back or his neck into the royal conveyance. Thus did the Almighty punish in this most remarkable manner, another of the persecutors of his holy Church.

After having treated his victim for a considerable time in this manner, Sapor had him finally beheaded and flayed. The skin was stuffed and preserved in one of the temples of the country, as a perpetual memorial of dishonor to the Roman name. Marcion, his unprincipled betrayer, and the same who instigated him to the persecution of the faithful, also experienced in turn the anger of the Lord. Having aspired to the purple, he was slain by his own troops, and thus received the merited reward of his impiety.

CHAPTER XVI.

PEACE IS RESTORED TO THE CHURCH—GALLIENUS ISSUES AN EDICT FAVORABLE TO THE CHRISTIANS—THE EXILED BISHOPS ARE PERMITTED TO RETURN—THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS HOWEVER STILL PERSECUTE—CLAUDIUS BECOMES EMPEROR—HE PERSECUTES—HE IS PUNISHED BY GOD—GENERAL PEACE OF THE CHURCH—DIOCLETIAN'S REIGN—THE GREATER PART OF IT FAVORABLE TO THE CHRISTIANS—HE PERSECUTES—VIOLENCE OF THE PERSECUTION IN ROME.

The death of Valerian brought peace to the Church. His son and successor abstained from walking in his steps, and even published an edict favorable to the Christians. He tolerated their worship, permitted the bishops to return to their flocks and prohibited any interference with them in the discharge of their religious obligations. Another document of a like nature secured to them the restoration of their forfeited temporalities of which they were unjustly deprived in the preceding reign. The edict permitting the clergy to return from exile was addressed to the bishops of Egypt and was as follows: "The Emperor Cæsar Publius Licinius Gallienus Pius Felix Augustus to Dionysius, Prima, Demetrius and others.—The benefit of the privilege granted by me I have ordered to be issued throughout the whole world that all may depart from their religious retreats; and therefore you also may make use of this copy of my edict that no one may molest you. And this liberty, indeed, which you are now permitted to have, has been long since granted by me. Aurelius Cyrenius therefore who has the chief administration of affairs will observe the copy here given to you."*

* Eusebius, book vii., chap xiii.

From the language of this document, it is evident that liberty of worship had been previously secured to the faithful in other parts of the empire. This accounts for the fact that it was not till 262, on the return of the troops against Marcion that Egypt acknowledged Gallienus.

Though by the emperor's orders complete liberty of conscience was accorded to the faithful, this did not entirely restrain the intolerant governors from occasionally exercising their cruelty against the believers. In fact, even then Christian blood was made to flow. The martyrdom of Marin by the governor of Cæsarea is evidence of this. He was an officer in the Roman army and should according to the regular order of promotion have attained to the post of captain. But his faith becoming known, he obtained three hours to determine between torments and death or apostasy and promotion. The former he cheerfully accepted, and thus consummated a glorious martyrdom. With this single exception, the reign of Gallienus was otherwise wholly free from the blood of the Christians. Gallienus perished in northern Italy in the year 268, the victim in all probability of the ambitious designs of Claudius II, his successor in the empire.

Entirely different in character from the late ruler, Claudius from the very beginning of his reign set himself to persecuting the faithful. Though a wise and provident ruler in a purely temporal sense, and a powerful defender of the empire, he showed himself an unrelenting enemy of the Christian name and faith. It is a noteworthy fact that under the least capable and most dissolute of the emperors the condition of the Christians was the most favorable. A spirit of opposition and contradiction more than a wise and impartial administration of justice, influenced the rulers in the case of the faithful, and the Christians in consequence became alternately the sport of the whims, the caprices, and prejudices of those in authority.

The absence of historical evidence has caused many to doubt the severity of the persecution under Claudius. It is true the pen of contemporary historians has transmitted nothing to us of the sufferings of the faithful at this epoch; but from various martyrologies it is clear that a vast number of Christians perished during this emperor's reign. His superstitious fears probably more than any natural ferocity led him to this and caused him to wield the sword with such terrible severity against the faithful. Ludicrous and grotesque, indeed, were the former, as is evidenced by the fact of his having slain at Rome 269 soldiers with their commander St. Blaste, as a holocaust to his favorite god, Mars. On the 24th of the same month he had St. Quirinus decapitated in prison and his body cast into the Tiber. To these may be added 248 others whose names occur in various martyrologies. But what establishes better than any thing else the persecuting propensity of this emperor is a document entitled the "Acts of the martyrs of Ostia."* It begins as follows: "Under the emperor Claudius, Ulpius Romulus being his vicar, a violent persecution arose against the Christians." And farther on it says: "The vicar Ulpius Romulus being come to the city of Ostia ordered all the saints without exception to be cast into prison." The document then relates the sufferings of some of the condemned.

While these proceedings were being enacted against the faithful by the sanction and under the authority of Claudius, the angel of destruction was preparing to execute the divine vengeance upon him. At Sirmium, where he was engaged in a contest with the Goths, he was taken ill with the plague and died of that disease, in the fifty-sixth year of his age and the second of his reign. The death of the tyrant brought another period of repose to the Christians.

* See Belouino, vol. ii, p. 349.

Claudius was succeeded by Aurelian who, like so many of his predecessors, showed himself at the commencement of his reign favorable to the faithful. This was owing, however, more to the difficulties of his position than to any leaning towards divine truth. The subjugation of his political rivals he found at first sufficient to engross all his attention. But when successful against these, he was not slow in manifesting his real propensities. The sentiments with which he was actuated, were clearly displayed in the sanguinary edict which he issued against the religion, but before it had reached the extremity of the empire, he was a corpse. The document, in consequence, never received from the governors that attention which it otherwise would; yet during the interregnum that followed, several of the faithful suffered for the cause of divine truth.

From the death of Aurelian, A. D. 275, till the accession of Diocletian 285, the imperial command passed through the hands of five successive rulers. Except under the last, the Christians did not suffer anything worth mentioning. This little repose, however, was quickly disturbed. Diocletian assumed the purple in 285, and, though at first friendly enough, towards the close of his reign he showed himself the most implacable of tyrants. During his rule more lives were forfeited in the cause of divine truth than in almost the entire two preceding centuries. The powers of darkness were then unchained and exercised for a brief period all the evil of which their perverted natures were capable. It was the darkness of night preceding the glorious light of day. In one sense it was deplorable, but in another most comforting. The mangled, lifeless bodies of the martyrs at the feet of their tormentors, were indeed a pitiable spectacle, if contemplated apart from the end attained; but regarded with the light of faith and in view of the rewards awaiting the faithful soldiers of Christ, they

were a subject more for rejoicing than mourning. In no other period did the Church receive such glory from the constancy of her children. Their sufferings are still her honor and shall ever continue to cast a halo of glory around her name. Nor was this testimony to divine truth confined to any particular class. It was shared in equally by all. The soldier from the ranks, the monk from his cell, and the maiden from her enclosure, went forth equally to death. Freedmen and slaves, philosophers and plebeians, clerics and laics, maidens and matrons, all alike rendered testimony to the Son of God and died nobly for the faith in the ranks of the martyrs. What appeared at the moment most certain, if judged after the fashion of the world, was the inability of the Church to hold out against so powerful an adversary. Humanly speaking, the last days of the Church had come. She was then, according to the notions of worldlings, in her last agony. But what then was so discouraging and disheartening, is now and ever shall be the most brilliant and glorious period of her career.

During the first seventeen years of his reign, Diocletian did not issue any edicts against the Christians. It was only during the last three years of his rule that the faithful were formally persecuted, by virtue of his diabolical ordinances. Those who were martyred during the first part of his reign, suffered in consequence of the ancient, existing law of the empire. Justice to his memory also demands the avowal that all the Christian blood, shed from his accession in 285 till his death in 303, is not to be entirely laid to his charge. In 286, Diocletian associated with himself in the empire, Maximian, a man of equally low and brutal instincts and of the most profligate manners. After governing for nine years, they found it expedient to associate with themselves, two others. The empire was thus parcelled out amongst four, and became, in a measure, four independ-

ent sovereignities. It would, consequently, be unfair to attribute the acts of all four, to one. That Diocletian was personally responsible for much, even during the early period of his rule, and that he persecuted even then the faithful followers of Christ, is indeed sufficiently attested by the Acts of the Martyrs of that period.

On the 23rd of August, 285, five Christians, of whom three were brothers, suffered the penalty of death for their faith in Cilicia. These were probably the first to suffer under Diocletian. The torments they were made to endure, were of the most barbarous and excruciating character. The first, who was named Claudius, on refusing to sacrifice to the gods, received a hundred lashes. This was only the prelude of what was to follow; but it made him only the more steadfast in his belief. "Though you should make me suffer a thousand times more," replied he, "you shall not accomplish your purpose." "The positive order of our invincible emperor," said the pro-consul, addressing him, "is, that all the Christians shall offer sacrifice to the gods, and if they refuse, that they be punished accordingly. If, on the other hand, they comply, they shall be loaded with honors and allowed to participate in the enjoyments of the emperor." To this the intrepid confessor replied: "These honors and pleasures of which you speak, are only for a time, while the recompense I shall receive for having confessed Jesus Christ, shall be eternal." The pro-consul had him then placed on a trestle and a fire lit beneath his feet; but, not contented, with this he ordered the flesh to be cut in lumps from the heroic confessor's body, and the bleeding morsels to be placed in Claudius' hands, with the view of forcing him to drop them through natural horror, that thus it might be affirmed he had offered them in sacrifice. Baffled in this, the pro-consul next ordered the confessor's body to be torn with hooks. But here, too, he was equally

as unsuccessful as in his other attempts. Potsherds and lighted torches were next employed, but all in vain. The heroic confessor was still unconquered: the grace of God assisted him to resist every attempt made upon his faith, and addressing his tormentor, he uttered these noble words: "Your fire and your punishment do me more good than you imagine; they secure my salvation. What one suffers for the name and glory of the Lord, causes no sadness, no grief. To die for Jesus Christ is worth all the riches of the world." The consul was conquered, the confessor had overcome him, and nothing remained but to remove Claudius and to cast him into prison, or to deprive him immediately of life. The former was done.

The next to give evidence in the same noble cause, was Asterius. He was a brother to Claudius and in every way worthy of his relationship with so noble a champion of the Cross. Suspended by the hair of the head, and having his sides torn with iron hooks, in response to the demand made upon him to sacrifice to the gods, he spiritedly answered: "I am brother to him who has confounded you by his answers: we are actuated by the same spirit, we have the same sentiments, the same faith, and the same God. Do your worst against me, my body is in your power; but thanks to God my soul is not." "Tear his feet with pincers," cried the judge, "burn them while others are flogging him." In vain; Asterius was still unshaken; he even solicited greater torture, if it were the tyrant's pleasure. "I ask only one favor," said he; "that you won't leave a single part of my body without a wound." For the second time the tyrant was overcome.

The third brother Neon was then summoned into the consul's presence. To the usual invitation to sacrifice to the gods, he replied by challenging their power. "If," said he, "they have power, let them revenge themselves upon those

who despise them without putting you to the trouble of punishing us. If they are anything, let them show it and make us aware of it." This and much of a like nature earned for the confessor a hundred blows on the head, each stroke being accompanied with the reminder that it was thus blasphemers were treated. Like his brother, the soles of his feet were burned, and a shower of blows discharged upon his back by order of the tyrant; but nothing being able to shake him, the consul gave judgment against him and his brothers in the following words: "Claudius, Asterus, and Neon, brothers and Christians, being all convicted of having blasphemed the immortal gods and of having further refused to sacrifice to them, shall each be crucified and their bodies abandoned to the beasts and birds of prey." The ignoble sentence was carried into effect on the 23rd August, 285.

The remaining victims were Domnina and Theonilla, two virtuous females. Like their companions in suffering, they gave the noblest testsmony to the divine truths, and expired in the midst of their torments. When threatened with fire and sword, Domnina courageously answered that she feared more the everlasting fire of hell, and the displeasure of the true God. Were she then cast into the flames, it would have cost her less than what she was made to endure by being barbarously stripped by order of the governor and beaten until she expired. The bloody executioners were still flogging her naked, mangled body, when her soul entered into eternal repose. Theonilla's time had then arrived, and her answers were alike courageous. "Your fire," replied she, "causes me no alarm. What I fear is the everlasting fire, that which burns the soul as well as the body, and which is prepared for those who renounce the worship of the true God in order to adore idols." This drew upon her the same brutal indignity to which her sister in the faith had just

been subjected. She was stripped naked and beaten till she expired, but not before being made to endure additional tortures, a fire being lighted under her body while the executioners were performing their work. Thus died these five martyrs in the first year of the reign of Diocletian.

The next year, A. D. 286, a persecution broke out at Rome, during which several of the faithful were martyred, amongst whom was St. Sebastian one of the most notable of those who died in the cause of divine truth at that period. Diocletian and Maximian had just arrived in the capital from Nicomedia, after celebrating the festivities in honor of the elevation of the latter to the purple. It would be difficult to assign the actual cause of this persecution; but that it was not general and did not extend even to the principal cities of Italy, is evident from the acts of Sebastian, who came expressly from Milan in the hope of receiving the martyr's reward. Sebastian was a citizen of Narbonne, but educated at Milan and attached to the military service. He had at first determined upon leading the life of a civilian, but the hope of being of greater service to his brethren caused him to enter the army. He accordingly embraced the military profession and, with the object stated above, got himself transferred to Rome. It was the divine inspiration that led him to this, if one be at liberty to judge by the advantages that attended his career. Many now owe to him the eternal recompense they enjoy in the kingdom of the blessed, for his exhortations and persuasive words sustained them in the hour of trial and carried them through the terrible ordeal to which their staggering faith was subjected. Amongst the most remarkable he thus assisted, were the twin brothers, Mark and Marcellis, probably Roman senators. They in a special manner had need of his kind assistance, for they had much to attach them to life and to stand between them and the promised rewards. They were

wealthy, had wives, children, and parents. Sebastian understood the danger in which they stood, and accordingly was more assiduous in his attentions. He visited them daily, consoled them in their afflictions, and encouraged them in their generous resolve. It was well he did, for the tears, the entreaties, and supplications of their families were beginning to produce their pernicious effects on the minds of the confessors. For an hour the youthful soldier represented to the brothers and their relatives the glory and advantage of dying for the faith, and the terrible consequences of abandoning it to save one's mortal existence. His words were aided from on high: God came visibly to his assistance by means of a miracle. For while he spoke he was surrounded by an extraordinary light and attended by several angels clothed in white. On concluding his discourse, the wife of the gaoler, Zoe, who for years had been deprived of the use of speech, cast herself at Sebastian's feet and by signs implored his intercession in her behalf. On making the sign of the cross over her and invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in her favor, she was instantaneously cured and commenced praising the Lord. Nicostratus, the husband of Zoe, could not resist the impulse of divine grace which was now accorded him. In turn he too fell at the saint's feet, demanded pardon for having retained the confessors in prison, and, granting them their liberty, begged them to depart. He would be only too happy to take their place and suffer in their stead; but to this the confessors generously objected and firmly determined to remain and, if need be, die for the faith. The scene enacted immediately after was more affecting still. Mark, one of the company, being greatly confirmed in his virtuous resolution, exhorted, in turn, the by-standers to remain firm in the faith. His words, were powerfully aided by divine grace, for he had hardly concluded his pious ad-

monition when the entire company burst into tears and declared their intention of suffering the greatest of torments rather than abandon their holy religion. Nicostratus now at Sebastian's request assembled the prisoners under his charge, many of whom were not yet formally admitted to the ranks of the faithful. These, after being duly instructed and encouraged, received the sacred baptismal rite at the hands of a venerable priest named Polycarp. They numbered in all sixty-eight persons, of whom sixteen were prisoners for the faith and the others members of the families of the prison officials. A miraculous occurrence attended the baptism of one of the number. For eleven years Tanquillin suffered from severe attacks of the gout. So affected were his members that he could hardly bear them to be touched, and it was even with difficulty that he could make use of his hands. Hardly, however, had he professed his belief in the adorable Trinity, in answer to the question put to him in baptism, than he was perfectly relieved of his corporal infirmity.

During the following six days, which were all that remained of the thirty granted by the governor before the day of trial, these virtuous Christians spent their time in praising God and preparing for the conflict in which they were about to engage. All thought themselves happy, even the very children, in being called to consummate so glorious a career. Meanwhile, the prefect, Chromance, who was afflicted with a like disease as Tanquillin, hearing of the miraculous occurrence, sent for that individual to learn how he had been relieved. Tanquillin assured him that, besides believing in Christ, he could assign no other cause, and that if the prefect adopted that means he might hope for cure, Polycarp was accordingly sent for, and, when he entered the prefect's presence, confirmed Tanquillin's assertion and expressed the belief

that if the sufferer embraced the Christian religion he might reasonably hope for a relief of his bodily infirmity. On assenting, Polycarp instructed him in the principle articles of the religion and appointed a triduum of fasting and prayer. It was further demanded of him, as a mark of sincerity, that he should immediately abandon his idols. To this he readily assented and consigned them to Polycarp and Sebastian, who thereupon shattered them into frag ments in his presence.* But Chromance was still uncured. It occurred to the saint that something which might be removed, still stood in the way, It was not his faith, for he believed with all his strength; yet something prevented his cure. On enquiry they learned that he had still a cabinet of astrological articles, with which he was loth to part. His son, too, was strongly attached to the same and unwilling that they should be destroyed; but not to stand in the way of his father's cure, he permitted them to be cast into the flames, mentally, however, resolved to cast Polycarp and Sebastian into the same, in case his parent's afflictions continued. There was no necessity for this; for by the time the articles were reduced to ashes, Chromance was restored to perfect health. An angel, in the shape of a youth, appeared to him on the part of our divine Lord, and affected his cure.

A still greater sacrifice was now demanded of our saint. He had hitherto renounced his idols, but not himself. Still attached to the world, it was necessary that he should renounce all irregular affections, before he could be admitted to the dignity of a Christian. His difficulties in this regard, were his carnal affections and the gratification of his irregular desires. Since the death of his wife, which happened prior to this date, he had lived in concubinage with a couple of abandoned females. To sepa-

* Belouino, vol. ii.

rate from the company of these, was his greatest trial; but he was equal to the occasion. The grace of God enabled him to surmount every obstacle. He went even further, and renounced even his profession of advocate on which he was just entering and for which he was pre-eminently fitted by his eloquence and erudition. Nor was this all. He liberated all his slaves to the number of 1000 and more, and had the happiness of seeing them enrolled on the same day as himself in the Christian ranks.* Meanwhile, Sebastian was unknown to the pagans as a Christian. This was fortunate, for the cause of religion; for it was in consequence of this misapprehension regarding his faith that he was enabled to render such services to his brethren. Had it been known or even suspected that he belonged to the hated sect, he would like so many others have fallen a victim to the popular intolerance. Sebastian would, indeed, have readily professed himself openly a Christian. Nothing would have given him greater delight; for to suffer for Christ was what brought him to Rome. But the consciousness of being able to render more service to the faithful, by remaining concealed, prevented him from publicly proclaiming his holy profession at that date. Thus unknown and endowed with those admirable qualities which attract the esteem and affection of others, without exciting either jealousy or rivalry, he became an object of special affection to his master, the emperor, and was in consequence raised to the dignity of captain in the pretorian guard. He was accordingly constantly in attendance on the emperor and possessed very considerable influence over him.

Chromance, with whose conversion the reader is acquainted, retired at this juncture from the capital. On the grounds of restoring his health, he obtained permission to

* Belouino, vol. ii.

retire to his country estate. An opportunity was thus afforded him of befriending the brethren, and he was not slow in availing himself of it to their advantage. With the generosity and charity of one who sees in the things of earth only so many means of promoting the interests of heaven, he freely and liberally offered to as many as wished a home with himself. Several readily accepted the generous offer, and this gave occasion to one of those contests of virtue, so common and edifying in the history of that period. It being necessary to send some one in charge of the colony, attention was directed to Sebastian and Polycarp. But the former excused himself on the ground of his service as an officer of the emperor, and the necessity he had of shedding his blood for the faith. On the other hand, Polycarp was no less urgent in seeking to remain, for a like purpose. The pious contest was determined in favor of Sebastian, the Pope judging it more beneficial to despatch the former, as being a cleric and thereby better enabled to render assistance to the brethren in their retirement. As for himself the Pope was determined to remain at the post of danger, and not to quit it except by his death.

The day that this little band in company with Chromance and Polycarp left the imperial city, is one of the most interesting in the annals of Christian Rome. It was on a Sunday morning that they took their departure. The divine mysteries had been celebrated in Chromance's house. The Pope officiated on the occasion, and at the conclusion of the divine service, after speaking of the advantages of martyrdom, he informed all present that they were at liberty to retire with Chromance, or to remain with himself. Eleven, amongst whom was Sebastian, remained with the Pope; the others retired to the country.

The violence of the persecution in the capital now became so excessive that the Christians had hardly anywhere to

screen themselves against the rage of their enemies; and yet, strange to imagine, it was in the emperor's palace, as being the least open to suspicion, that the Pope with a few faithful companions was concealed. They were granted this kindness by a Christian named Castulus, an employe of the court, whose lodgings were in the attic. During the time that they remained in concealment, they occupied themselves solely with the affair of their salvation, spending their days in fasting and prayer, in preparation for the moment when they would be called upon to testify to divine truth. The first of this happy society to receive the immortal crown was Zoe the wife of Nicostratus. She was apprehended while praying at the tomb of St. Peter, on the day of his feast. On refusing to offer incense to the idols, she was cast into prison, where for six days she was deprived of all food and drink. Constant in her holy resolve, she was then ordered to be suspended to a tree, and a fire lighted beneath her. When life was extinct the body was cast into the Tiber. Her soul appeared shortly after to Sebastian, and announced to him his immediate death. This heroic conduct on the part of Zoe, stirred up a holy emulation in the breasts of the others, and caused Tanquillin to go also to the tomb of the Apostle, with the view of obtaining the same reward; for, was it not shameful, thought he, that a man should be forestalled in so noble a work by a woman. He also was captured and stoned by the populace, his body in like manner being cast into the Tiber. Five others, Nicostratus, Claudius, Castor, Victor and Symphorien, were apprehended immediately after, while searching for the bodies of Zoe and Tanquillin. For six days the prefect used all his endeavors to shake their constancy, but in vain. His every effort was met with a prompt and generous refusal to sacrifice to any other than the one true God of heaven and earth. By

the emperor's orders these confessors were then subjected thrice to the torture. But even this failed to shake their constancy, and in consequence they were cast into the sea on the 17th of July. The venerable Pontiff, Caius was the next victim. It could not be expected that he could remain very long concealed in the household of his inveterate enemy. It was not, however, to the vigilance of the authorities that his arrest is to be attributed. A wretched apostate and informer named Torquatus, made known his retreat. To screen the atrocity of his action this unhappy individual allowed himself to be arrested with the holy Pope; but his device was quickly discovered, and his name branded with merited dishonor. Caius, on being summoned into the presence of the prefect, was ordered either to cast incense upon the fire, or to walk upon the burning coals with bare feet. It was a happy alternative; it served to prove the Pontiff's readiness to suffer for Christ, and to illustrate the Redeemer's power over the elements of nature. Making the sign of the cross over the coals, the Pontiff immediately began to walk upon the burning fuel without feeling the smallest pain, or suffering the slightest inconvenience. The prefect was amazed, but instead of attributing the miracle to its proper cause, wickedly referred it to the power of magic. "Your Christ has taught you magical arts," cried he. The imputation on the sacred character of the Redeemer, was too much for the saint. He repelled indignantly the accusation, and was accordingly condemned to be beheaded, a sentence which was carried into effect in his regard on the eleventh of August, A. D. 286. The wretched Torquatus was not yet satisfied with his work of betrayal; one victim was not enough for his purpose. He thirsted still for the blood of others, and, in consequence, availed himself of his knowledge to have Castulus, the generous host of whom I have spoken, ar-

rested. Three times, did this virtuous man resist the torture, when he was finally placed in a trench and smothered beneath a quantity of sand. The brothers, Mark and Marcellus, were next nailed to stakes and pierced with arrows.

The same year that witnessed the death of these martyrs, beheld also the conversion and martyrdom of St. Genesius. His was amongst the most remarkable of the many notable conversions of that primitive period. It was the more striking as being operated instantaneously by divine grace, at a moment when the most solemn and sacred rites of religion were being travestied for the pleasure of the unbelieving populace. Genesius was a comedian and one of the leading actors in Rome at that time. He excelled in the art of personification and this, added to a charming voice, made him a general favorite and highly esteemed by the emperor. Knowing that Diocletian hated the Christians, it occurred to him to bring on the stage, when the emperor was present, a piece in which the religion would be burlesqued. The plot represented a Christian at the moment of death and desirous of receiving the last sacraments. Carried in a litter in presence of the audience, Genesius affected the condition of one seriously ill, and, as if alarmed at the thought of his perilous position, suppliantly invoked the aid of a priest. "Of what use," inquired his assistant, "can he be to you?" "In order," replied the actor, "that God at my death may receive me into paradise as a deserter from your gods." This was the cause of general merriment to the audience. A messenger was immediately despatched, ostensibly for a priest, and in the subsequent act we are introduced to the apparently dying man, with two of his companions standing by his couch and representing, the one, a minister of religion, and the other, his attendant. "What dost thou desire and why hast thou summoned us here?" demanded the former. Enlightened at that very moment by a ray of divine

grace, and entirely changed in consequence, Genesius answered, not indeed in jest but in all the seriousness of a converted soul: "I desire the grace of Jesus Christ by your ministry, in order that obtaining a new birth in baptism, I may be purified from all my sins and relieved from the load of my iniquities." The change that was at that moment effected in the actor's regard, was unknown to all but himself. It was still thought that he was acting a part and right heartily did the audience applaud the burlesque. The ceremonies were gone through; the neophyte was clothed in the white robe; the curtain fell; and when next it rose the audience beheld the pretended soldiers despatched by the prefect to seize upon the newly-made Christian and to carry him to the emperor. Diocletian enjoyed the scene immensely, and in order to act his part when Genesius was brought before him, he feigned the greatest displeasure and rage, and asked, in apparent astonishment, if it were true that the actor were a Christian. The scene that ensued was by far the most remarkable that ever occurred in a Roman theatre. No one up to that moment had the slightest suspicion of what had happened to Genesius, and, while every eye was riveted on the emperor and the newly-made Christian, Genesius answered aloud in his splendid voice: "My Lord and you, grandees of the empire, officers of the royal palace, courtiers and citizens, be attentive to my words. I had conceived such a horror of the Christians that to meet them I always regarded it as an unfavorable omen. Their name was to me so detestable that I could not prevent myself shuddering on hearing it mentioned, and I took it as a special delight to insult them in the midst of their torments. This unreasonable aversion prevailed with me so far that I could not even endure the presence of those who were allied to me by the closest bonds of friendship and family ties. Enough for me that they were Christians, in order to be

the objects of my hatred. Their most holy mysteries appeared to me no less worthy of mockery than their persons of contempt. That is why I carefully studied their ceremonies and the various observances of their religious belief—in order to turn them to ridicule and to compose from them the comedies entertaining to my auditors. But, marvelous to consider, the very moment that the water of baptism touched my body, and that I had answered in the affirmative to the interrogatories put to me regarding my Christian belief, I beheld at that instant a troop of heavenly spirits descending from heaven and arranging themselves around my couch. They read from a book all the sins of my life, and immediately after plunged it into the font where I still was. Thence drawing it forth, they showed it to me as if nothing had ever been written therein. Do, then, O emperor, and you, O Romans, who listen to me, and who have so often applauded the profanations I have made of those sacred mysteries, begin to revere them this day: believe that Jesus Christ is the true God; that he is light, truth and goodness—by him you can hope for the pardon of your sins."

It would be difficult to realize the impression this made on the emperor and the entire assembly. It was so unexpected, so frank and unhesitating an avowal of Christian faith, that hatred, astonishment, and rage succeeded each other alternately in rapid succession in the minds of his auditors. Boiling with fury Diocletian delivered over the actor to Plautien, prefect of the pretorium. In vain did this zealous official employ every means in his power to induce the saint to sacrifice to the gods. In vain had he his sides torn and burned in the futile attempt to prevail upon him to change. To every demand made upon his constancy Genesius would answer: "There is no other

sovereign Lord of the world, but the God whom I serve. I adore him, I recognize him, as my Lord, and though I should be obliged to die a thousand deaths for him, I would die a thousand times with joy." Torments proving unavailing he was finally condemned to be beheaded, a sentence which was carried into effect on the 25th of August.

It was now the year 288, and though only three years had elapsed since Diocletian occupied the throne, several had in the interim suffered for the faith; and yet the man who encouraged these to constancy was still alive though in the midst of danger. It was only a question of time, however, when he would suffer, for his faith was too strong and his zeal too earnest to prevent him being recognized as a member of the proscribed religion. Sebastian was accordingly discovered. His position as captain made his case an exceptional one, and caused the prefect to refer it to Diocletian. The emperor was amazed; he was unable to comprehend how one who had been so highly favored could have repaid his kindness with such ingratitude, and he reproached Sebastian accordingly. To this the saint replied that he had never ceased to pray the God of heaven and earth for his majesty's safety and the preservation of the empire. But no assurance of this nature could weigh with the tyrant, as long as Sebastian was a Christian, and he was in consequence handed over to the archers to be executed. After accomplishing, as they thought, the emperor's command, the saint was still alive, and was removed into the palace to be cared for by Irene the widow of Castulus, with whose death the reader has been already made acquainted. In a short time he had recovered sufficiently to be able to move about, when his friends earnestly entreated him to retire and save himself by flight. To this he firmly demurred. He had come to Rome, he declared, to

die for the faith, and now that one half the combat was over, he was not going to fly from the contest. What did he care for death; it was to him the gate that opened to life everlasting. With this utter disregard for existence and contempt for the enjoyment of the things of earth, he resolved to perform the last act in his power in behalf of religion. That was to reproach the emperor for his cruelty towards the Christians. With this resolve he placed himself on the stairs he knew his master must pass. Diocletian was amazed at seeing him, for he was assured that his orders had been carried into effect and that Sebastian was slain. The saint's escape, however, did not diminish the emperor's aversion, and orders were again given for his execution. This time the work was accomplished effectually. The saint was cudgeled in the royal circus until life was extinct, when his body was thrown into the Tiber. He appeared afterward to one of the faithful and expressed a desire that his remains should be interred in the Catacombs, a wish which was faithfully carried into effect by his friends and admires.

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CHAPTER XVII.

DECIMATION OF THE THEBAN LEGION—ATTEMPT TO PREVENT THE PROPAGATION OF RELIGION IN FRANCE—MARTYRDOM OF ST. QUENTIN—MARTYRDOM OF SS. DENIS, RUSTICUS, AND ELEUTHERIUS—THE BURNING OF THE EMPEROR'S PALACE AT NICOMEDIA—OCCASION TAKEN OF THIS TO PERSECUTE THE CHRISTIANS—BLOODY EDICTS ISSUED—THE CHURCHES TO BE DESTROYED—THE CHRISTIANS NOT PUNISHED WITH DEATH AT FIRST—THE PERSECUTION BECOMES GENERAL—SUFFERING OF THE CHRISTIANS IN SPAIN AND GAUL.

The political history of the empire was signalized in 286 by the revolt of the population of Belgic Gaul. To restore order and to reduce the country to submission, it was necessary to reinforce the troops then in that part of the empire. To this end, the newly elected emperor Maximian immediately set out from Rome with all the available force at his command; but as these numbers were insufficient, his colleague in the empire had what was known as the Theban Legion sent to his assistance. The troops composing this corps were entirely Christian and amounted to about five thousand. After passing the Alps, by the way of Yvree, the legion encamped on the Swiss side at a place called Agnane. The emperor had his camp already pitched three miles farther on at a town named Octodune. Thither the troops were summoned with the view of having them sacrifice to the gods. The Theban legion was ordered to be in readiness to punish those who refused. To this they resolutely demurred, declaring their inability to obey such an order. Thereupon the emperor flew into a rage and in his fury ordered the legion to be decimated. The sight of a tenth of their number punished with death, he

imagined, would strike terror into the hearts of the others and cause them to submit to his orders; but in this he judged amiss. He did not know how powerful is the grace of God and how it enables those who possess it to brave and despise every hardship and suffering in the cause of divine truth. Finding the legion as resolute as ever after the execution of his cruel order, he commanded it to be decimated a second time. But the determination of the remainder was as unshaken as ever. No hesitation or sign of apostasy was manifested by any. Animated by their commanders and especially encouraged by their colonel, Saint Maurice, who ceased not to represent to them the glory of the contest in which they were engaged and its admirable advantages in their regard, they unanimously resolved to perish rather than yield to the impious demands made on their faith. Hence, to avoid all further ambiguity and to enlighten the emperor as to their real intentions, they respectfully forwarded to him the following document, which may be justly regarded as the noblest profession of faith that has ever been made by a body of laics: "Emperor!—We are your soldiers, but we are also the servants of the true God and we glory in acknowledging it. You have honored us with the military service, but we owe to God the inestimable gift of innocence. We receive from you pay as the recompense due to our labors, but we hold from God life, as a permanent gratuitous gift and which we could never merit. It is not then any longer permitted us to obey our emperor, since God prohibits us. Command us to do what is just, and you will find us submissive, obedient and ready to undertake everything for your service and your glory. Show us an enemy and we shall answer for his overthrow. Our hands await only your order to steep them in his blood. But we shall never spill the blood of our brethren. Have we taken up arms to exterminate the

Romans or to defend them? And is it not for justice, for the preservation of the empire, to maintain its tranquillity that we have up to the present fought? That has been always the price as well as the motive for our encountering the many perils to which we have been daily exposed. But if we are wanting in that fidelity which we have promised to God, what assurance will you have that we will preserve that which we have sworn to you. A double oath binds us to God and our emperor; if we violate the first, it won't cost us much to break the second. You ask us to slay the Christians. Why do you not employ for that purpose your pagan soldiers? They have obeyed you so well when you ordered them to lay hands upon our companions. Why do you expect so much from us? Who stops you? We confess a God, the Creator of all things and Jesus Christ his Son, God as well as the Father. We have just seen our dear companions expire under the cruel sword of your executioners and we are wholly covered with their blood. Have you seen us shed a single tear, have we uttered a single sigh, has it been told you that we deplore their premature death? On the contrary we have accompanied them with our desires, with a thousand marks of joy. We envy them, we esteem them happy to have been found worthy of suffering for their God. In fine, let nothing be expected from us. The fear of death shall not arm our hands in order to repel whatever may happen to us, and our emperor though we suffer shall not be the less dear to us. We shall not ward off the blows that he shall cause us to receive, nor shall we make use of our arms to prevent the execution of his orders, however unjust they may be. We prefer in a word to die rather than to do the least evil to our brethren. And between dying innocent and living culpable, there is no choice. In fine, we are Christians; we cannot spill the blood of Christians."

Far from appeasing the tyrant and causing him to alter his resolution, this respectful but firm remonstrance made him only the more desperate and enraged. He accordingly in his despair of bringing over these champions to his desires, ordered them all to be immediately put to the sword. It was a dreadful carnage. The blood of some hundreds reddened the plain. A vigorous and perhaps a successful resistance might have been made by those men, but in imitation of their divine Master, who, though infinite power yet suffered himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, they laid down their arms and offered no opposition on the approach of their executioners. The whole legion was not there at the time; another part had gone into Gaul and these also became the object of the emperor's rage. To destroy them an officer named Rictius Varus was immediately despatched. He came up with a part of them at Treves and another part at Cologne, where he caused them to be executed. Not contented with fulfilling his master's command, Rictius Varus next directed his attention to the citizens of the first named locality, and executed a considerable number of them on the grounds of having received as brethren the members of the legion.

The progress which the religion was making at this time throughout Gaul, was a subject of constant and serious alarm to Varus. He would stop it if possible, and nothing would be left undone, on his part, to prevent the spread of the reign of Christ. With this resolution firmly fixed in his mind, he immediately hastened to Amiens, and had arrested St. Quentin as being the most notable in propagating the religion in that part. By order of the prefect, the saint was first cast into prison and loaded with chains. He was next cruelly whipped, extended upon a rack, and his body disjointed. All this proving insufficient, the demon

of cruelty urged his tormentors to still further excesses. Stretched on the ground, boiling oil and burning pitch were poured upon his already lacerated back, while lighted torches were, at the same time, applied to his sides. It was, however, all in vain, for the saint's fidelity to his God remained unshaken. As a final effort to conquer his constancy, the brutal prefect had his body pricked with needles, but this resulting like the other attempts, he was finally beheaded at the village of Vermont, on the 31st of October, 287. His body was cast into the Saone, but was miraculously recovered forty years later.

It was during this persecution that SS. Denis of Paris, Rusticus and Eleutherius, were martyred. Meantime Rictius Varus tormented and executed the Christians wherever he found them. Thus a great number, amongst whom were SS. Fuscien, Victor, Rufus, Valerius and others, yielded up their lives in the interests of divine truth. In Italy, at the same time, similiar noble testimony was being rendered to the faith. Before Maximin had started from Rome on the occasion referred to above, he had, in common with his colleague in the empire, appointed as pro-consul of Asia, an officer named Pinien. This official, happening to be converted by force of a miracle, liberated the Christians who were in prison and conducted them into Italy, where they were apprehended and martyred for the faith at the period of which we speak.

While the prefect Rictius Varus was pursuing the Christians with fire and sword in the North, the emperor Maximin himself was acting the same nefarious part in the South. It was especially at Marseilles, that the brutality of the emperor showed itself to the greatest extent. There the Christians found no quarter at all. The barbarity of the pagan populace outstripped, if possible, the malignant efforts of their imperial master. They neither spared the

members of their own families, nor did they pay any attention to age or sex, but dragged all indiscriminately before the altars of their impious demons, and forced them to sacrifice or to die.* Amongst those who signalized themselves at this juncture, in sustaining the drooping courage of the faithful, and animating them with confidence and courage in the contest, was a youth of noble origin, named Victor. This courageous boy was not long in drawing upon himself the attention of the authorities, who, having him arrested, forwarded him to the emperor. Maximin, enraged at not being able to overcome the constancy of this faithful soldier of Christ, ordered him to be treated with the utmost cruelty, and commanded him to be dragged by cords attached to his hands and feet, through the gutters of the city, as a mark of opprobrium and contumely. On the execution of this sentence, bleeding and mangled, the generous confessor was again confronted with his judge, but sustained by divine grace, he was as unshaken as ever in his profession of divine truth. Again and again did those ministers of satan urge him to abandon his pious resolve, when finding their every entreaty and artifice wholly in vain, he was condemned to be crucified like his divine master. While undergoing this painful sentence, the Son of God appeared to him, and holding the standard of the cross in his hand, as the signal of victory, said to Victor: "I am Jesus, who bear in my saints the evil which they endure." Then encouraging the holy confessor, the Redeemer continued: "Be courageous and constant: I am your support in the combat, as I will be your glorious recompense after victory." At these words all Victor's pains ceased, and with a serene and joyful countenance he thanked his Savior for the mercies bestowed upon him. The prefect seeing that his death under such circumstances

* Belouino, vol. 3, p. 67.

would be a triumph, had him detached from the cross, and cast again into prison. But here once more, the Savior was not wanting in comforting his servant, for sending angels to his assistance, the entire prison where he was confined, was filled with a heavenly light, more brilliant than the sun, at the same time that these heavenly messengers were audibly heard chanting, the praise of the Lord. The three soldiers that were on guard, Alexander, Longinus and Felix, witnessing these wonders, were touched by divine grace, and expressed a desire to become Christians—a happy consummation which was effected in their regard that very night. When this was reported to Maximin, on the following day, he was beside himself with rage, and ordered the newly converted to immediately sacrifice to the gods, or to be punished with death. In their contest with the tyrant, the neophytes were very much strengthened and encouraged by Victor's pious address. "Courageous companions," said he to them, "now that you are about to begin the contest, you must gather all your strength and preserve inviolable for God the faith which you have pledged to him. The enemy thinks to surprise you at the first moment of your apprenticeship, hoping that your little experience will grant him an easy victory. But Jesus Christ is already more deeply rooted in your hearts than he imagines; you are not so young as he supposes. For long since accustomed to war, you have only changed the object. Act so that God shall be pleased with having confided to you at your baptism, the honor of his religion, and having chosen you, to open the combat." To this the saint added more of a like encouraging nature, reminding them how near they were to obtaining the promised reward, and how the same road had been traversed by the Savior himself. Faithful to their promises, the three newly converted soldiers persevered in their

holy profession, and were accordingly beheaded, by order of the emperor, amid the execration, the rage and blasphemy of the unbelievers. Victor, who was witness of the execution, begged earnestly with tears of God, that he might not be deprived of so glorious a death. This prayer was heard, but his sufferings were more prolonged than those of his friends. After having been suspended in the air and cruelly beaten with whips, and cudgeled, more dead than alive he was cast into prison where for three days he suffered all the tortures of a slow but most painful martyrdom. At the end of that period, he was again brought before the emperor: an altar to Jupiter was erected in his presence, and he was ordered to approach and offer incense to that deity. Inflamed with an ardent zeal for the cause of the true God, the holy confessor approached, apparently with the object of complying, but instead of performing the idolatrous act, he overturned with a kick, the altar and the idol, thereby showing his detestation of idolatrous worship. The rage of the emperor now knew no bounds, and he ordered as the most appropriate punishment, the amputation of the foot that had offered such an insult to his God. Thus mutilated, this generous soldier of Christ was next dragged to a mill, with the view of being crushed into a thousand pieces; but the engine miraculously refusing to work, it was found necessary in order to accomplish the emperor's orders, to have him beheaded. As the executioner accomplished his task and the head rolled on the ground, a voice from heaven was heard: "You have conquered, Victor; you have conquered!" *

Up to this date, and for some time after, no edict was issued against the Christians by Diocletian and his colleague. All the persecutions they were were made to undergo was by virtue of the ancient existing laws. A political

* Belouino, p. 80.

change in the empire at this period, rendered the condition of the Christians still more deplorable, and served as a prelude to that unexampled persecution which, as we shall presently see, characterized the last years of Diocletian's reign. To provide the better for the government of the empire, Diocletian and Maximian, in the year 292, attached to themselves in the enjoyment of the sovereign power, two of their most famous generals Galerius and Constantius. These received the titles of Cæsars, and had assigned to them for their government separate portions of the empire: the former got Thrace and Illyricum, and the latter, Gaul, Britain, Iberia, and Mauritania. No two characters could be more opposed than those of the new Cæsars. Galerius was rude, choleric, and cruel. He was a man of no education, having been a shepherd before he joined the army. To his great physical strength, his endurance of fatigue, and contempt of danger, he owed his promotion in the army and finally to the purple. Constantius, on the other hand, was of an amiable and gentle disposition, dignified in bearing and of respectable lineage.

Shortly after his elevation to the supreme power, Galerius showed the disposition of which he was possessed, by formally instituting a persecution of the Christians. In this he was ably seconded by his mother, who was a bitter and avowed enemy of the faithful. But as an indiscriminate slaughter of the Christians would have endangered his power, on account of the vast numbers that then professed the faith, he was necessitated, from motives of policy and self-interest, to suppress for a time his most ardent desires. Nothwithstanding, several were proceeded against, more covertly than openly, and made to suffer for the cause they had espoused. By little and little, the tyrant was emboldened to proceed to severer measures, though not to a general persecution. · The following may be taken as il-

lustrative of this. Saint Andrew, a tribune of the army, having converted a considerable number of the soldiers under his command, was denounced to his commander Antiochus. This latter had Andrew cast into prison after having tortured him frightfully; but the affair being referred to the emperor in view of the danger of a general revolt among the troops, he ordered the saint to be liberated. This, however, did not save him from the tyrant's fury, for shortly after he was martyred with nearly three thousand of his command. If Galerius did not gratify his bloody instinct to a greater extent, this is not to be attributed to any unwillingness on his part, but to a fear of provoking a general rising against his authority. The cruelty exercised by Galerius, was in some measure entirely exceptional. It was a rejecting of divine truth in the face of the most miraculous evidence. The martyrdom of Andrew, who gained a signal victory over the Persians, by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the instantaneous conversion of Genesius of which we have spoken above, are instances of this.

We now approach the bloodiest and most tyranical deed of that period. At the commencement of the year 302, the emperors Diocletian and Galerius were at Nicomedia. They had gone there with the view of passing the winter in that agreeable climate. No enemy was then to be subdued; a general tranquillity prevailed all over the empire; but this very circumstance which should have been the protection of the Christians became only the occasion of their ruin. For having no other to contend with, the inhuman licentious Galerius found a fitting subject for his cruelty in the virtuous and unoffending Christians. From the beginning, as we have seen, he was the uncompromising enemy of the faithful. He hated them with that blind and passionate hatred which listens to no reason, but persecutes

for persecution' sake. Having now, nothing else on his hands, he employed all his efforts to obtain from Diocletian a general decree of persecution against the Christians at large. It was a dangerous and most perilous proceeding, even politically, for probably more than a fourth of the population was Christian at that time. To slaughter in cold blood and without any provocation or pretext other than their faith, such a vast number of unoffending, peaceful citizens, was a measure from which even the most tyrannical and reckless would shrink. This was why Diocletian refused at first to adopt the measure proposed. He hesitated knowing the character and readiness of the Christians to die for their faith, and he was aware, too, that their death would be a triumph against him. Thus the entire winter passed without any measures being taken against the faithful. Galerius still insisted; if it cost him the lives of half his subjects, he was determined that it should be done. His object was to annihilate the Christian faith, to root it completely out of the world. Thus pressed by his colleague, Diocletian yielded to a first concession. He summoned a council of his most influential and trusted servants both of the army and civil administration, in order to solicit their views and be guided by their council. Meanwhile Galerius was not idle in suggesting to the members of the council, the views he wished to have adopted—a course in which he was preeminently successful, for the assembled members urged very strongly the policy of persecution.

Diocletian, however, was still undecided. He wanted, before undertaking so dreaded a work, before commanding so wholesale a butchery, the approval of the gods. To this end he consulted Apollo, by whom an answer was returned, that as long as the just (meaning the Christians) lived on earth he would not render any oracles. Though protected now both by gods and men from the

consequences of the measures demanded and the odium attaching to it, Diocletian yet hesitated to issue the fatal edict. He was like one who knew not how to act. Appearances, however, were sufficiently saved as long as he acted under the dictates of the deities, and by the advice of his most tried and experienced counsellors; but his conscience still reproached him and forbade him performing such a deed of cruelty. In this conflict, as it were between duty and conscience, he determined upon steering a middle course which was to interdict the exercise of the religion to the soldiers and persons at court, without attaching to their refusal to obey the penalty of death. This was also accompanied by an order to destroy the cathedral church of the city. There was a question between the emperors as to how this should be effected. Galerius, whose fiery rage against the Christians knew no bounds, was for burning the edifice, but Diocletian, seeing in this a probable danger which might result to the entire city, was satisfied with its being razed to the ground. This determination eventually prevailed. Accordingly, on the morning of the 23rd of February, 303, a detachment of soldiers was despatched to carry out the emperor's wishes. They forced open the doors, pillaged and destroyed every thing of value on which they could lay their hands, gave up the Sacred Scriptures to the flames, and by means of axes and other implements, with which they were armed for the occasion, undermined the sacred edifice within the space of a few hours, and thus inaugurated that reign of terror and tyranny which for the following decade has never been surpassed or equalled in atrocity in the world.

On the following day, the 24th of February, the first edict was issued. It was of a general character and commanded that all the Christian churches throughout the empire should be destroyed, and the Sacred Scriptures

committed to the flames. Galerius' wishes were now being fully accomplished. For this he had labored and sighed from the moment he had been invested with the title and authority of Cæsar; but little did he think that there was one more powerful, whose hand was against him. By virtue of this first edict, all the Christians were deprived of their dignities, titles and employment. They were stripped of all civic and national rights. Every suit brought against them was, by the fact of their being Christians, to be adjudicated unfavorably to their interests. In a word, they were subjects without rights, citizens without protection. It was, moreover, forbidden them to assemble for purposes of religion, and in case of a violation of this order, the places of meeting were liable to be seized upon and confiscated by the authorities. This was one of the heaviest blows against the religion, for while it deprived the believers of their temporal goods, it prevented them from assembling for purposes of religion. The consternation and apprehension that this violent and tyrannical proceeding produced in the minds of the faithful, cannot be readily realized. In it they saw the prelude to still greater and more tyrannical acts. They were well aware of the character and disposition of Galerius, they knew how earnestly he desired their destruction, and that if he did not proceed to still greater extremes, it was to be attributed to the partial moderation and unwillingness of his colleague. Any inadvertence on the part of the faithful, or even alleged crimes, was ready to turn the tide of persecution against them, and to cause them to be sacrificed by thousands. In this they were only judging from the past and not at all rashly, as the future will show. The first edict not proving sufficiently oppressive, according to the notions of the tyrant, it was followed shortly after by another, by which it was commanded that the bishops every-

where should be cast into prison and constrained to offer sacrifice. It was hardly to be expected that of so many all would be faithful. That the overwhelming majority, however, remained constant, is attested by a contemporary writer. "Then, indeed, vast numbers of the prelates of the Church endured with a noble resolution the most appalling trials and exhibited instances of illustrious conflict for the faith."*

By neither of the edicts was it ordered to proceed to the extreme penalty of death in case of a refusal. That was still to come and the smallest pretext was ready to be seized upon by Galerius to urge Diocletian to this ulterior measure. He was not long in finding one. On the publication of the second edict to which I have alluded, a Christian of Nicomedia in a moment of virtuous indignation tore the persecuting document from its place and trampled it under foot. This was all that Galerius desired; it was a sufficient pretext for accusing the Christians of sedition, rebellion, and evil designs. What better proof than so audacious and sacrilegious an act! The trick, however, did not succeed as well as he wished. Diocletian could not see in it a sufficient motive for launching the last bloody edict for the destruction of all his Christian subjects. Something else, accordingly, had to be improvised to induce him to this. The palace where the emperors resided was fired by an unknown hand. Some positively assert that Galerius himself was the author of the deed. However that may be, he laid hold of it to accomplish his cherished purpose. "Now at least," he urged upon Diocletian, "you have sufficient proof of the intentions of those base mortals. What other but Christian hands could have done the deed and what other but Christian minds could have contemplated the burning of their emperors in their own palace." The aged emperor

* See Eusebius.

was partly inclined to believe the malignant assertions; but yet he refused his assent to the measure demanded. Fifteen days later another fire broke out in the palace and then Galerius pretending a terrible fear quitted the court and Nicomedia that he might not, as he alleged, fall a victim to the treachery of the Christians. He knew very well what an impression his absence would produce on the mind of Diocletian—how when left to his own gloomy meditations, imaginary fears would appear as realities, and his political conduct would be shaped accordingly. He was not wrong in his suspicions. Left to himself to brood over the affair, his mind became filled with the darkest suspicions. He saw an enemy in every face and a traitor in every attendant. The closest ties of relationship were insufficient to allay his alarm, and in his rage he had the Christian members of his household cruelly tortured, not even excepting his own daughter and wife. Some unhappily yielded to his fury, and apostatized from the faith by offering the customary oblations but others on the contrary gave the noblest examples of virtue and preserved themselves intact from every attempt on their faith. The case of Dorotheus, a member of the emperor's household, may be cited as an instance of this. On refusing to sacrifice to the idols, as commanded, he was stripped and scourged till the bones were laid bare and, while the quivering flesh was still palpitating from the effects of the scourging, vinegar mingled with salt was poured over the parts and rubbed into the wounds! Not yielding even to this he was next placed upon a gridiron and his bleeding, mangled body subjected to the action of a slow, but steady fire, so that his tortures might be prolonged as much as it was possible. His spirit was yet undaunted and so, after a protracted torment, he ended his existence by a glorious martyrdom.

From the palace the persecution was extended to the city

and thence to the entire empire. At last Galerius' wish was gratified and the bloody edict, commanding all the Christians every-where to be slaughtered indiscriminately, unless they immediately conformed to the emperor's wish by sacrificing to the idols, was launched by Diocletian. The effect was startling and terrible to contemplate. All know what a few in authority can do against an unarmed and inoffensive mob. Every-where the Christians were hunted down as so many noxious beasts. It was the will of the emperor that they should be destroyed or converted, and that was sufficient for the malefactors whose hands were engaged in the bloody performance. Whole families were involved in the common ruin. It was not Rachel weeping for her children because they were not, but it was the universal Church of God mourning for her best and most devoted adherents. Desolation was in every household. Neither age, nor sex, nor rank was a safe-guard against the sword of the executioner. The old man of three score and ten, as well as the infant of yesterday, became alike the victims of the fury of the executioners. It was in reality a war of extermination. Nothing short of the total destruction of the Christian race, or the renunciation of their faith, would satisfy the tyrant's desire. Little did those agents of satan imagine that there was then fighting on the part of the Christians a power stronger than theirs. The very apparent weakness of the Christians, that is their readiness to die, was in reality their strength and the secret of victory. This their enemies failed to understand, and hence the blind and fanatic endeavors they made to destroy the religion by destroying the believers. So great was the number of martyrs that, to avoid the inconvenience of burying them, the bodies were heaped together in great numbers and set on fire! Even this was found too troublesome and tedious, and so, to expedite matters, vessels were laden with the Chris-

tians and sunk at sea! The slaves were treated in a still more opprobrious manner, being cast into the deep with weights attached to their necks.

The reader will readily understand how the effect of the edict was variously felt in different localities. A great deal depended on the temper and disposition of the magistrate to whom it was committed for execution. Naturally at Nicomedia under the emperor's eye, it obtained its strictest application. Hence the vast number of martyrs by which this place has been honored. The humane disposition of Constantius to whom the western provinces, Britain, Spain and Gaul, were intrusted, rendered the edict partly inoperative. Christian blood, however, was shed in those parts; but this was the work of the local governors and cannot be fairly charged upon Constantius. Being only Cæsar he could not without openly espousing the Christian cause wholly prevent the application of the document. Hence the cruelties practiced by his subordinate. Of the three countries subject to his authority, Britain suffered the least and Spain the most. At the time of the promulgation of the general edict for the destruction of the Christians, Dacius commanded as sub-governor in Spain. Immediately on receiving the document he ordered the ministers of the gospel to be seized, cast into prison and confined till they should sacrifice. Amongst the number was Vincent, deacon of Saragossa, whose admirable fortitude under the torture to which he was subjected, earned for him a prominent place in the history of that period. When the ordinary methods had failed to extort from him a renunciation of his faith, his enemies proceeded to the cruelest extremes. He was elevated in the air to a considerable height and allowed to fall to the ground. His sides were next torn by iron hooks which entered into his bowels. This was followed by his being confined in a dark, narrow chamber, whence

the light of day was carefully excluded, and which barely afforded room for his body. On the floor of this room was strewn a quantity of broken vessels whose sharp points entering his feet served as so many instruments of torture. In vain, however, did the enemies of religion endeavour to overcome his constancy. The Almighty came specially to his aid and turned the very instruments intended for his torture into objects that ministered to his pleasure. Thus by a miraculous effect, the darkness of his prison was changed into a luminous light, the potsherds into roses, while angels, addressing him in words of comfort and of triumph, bade him prepare for that heavenly banquet which is the reward of the faithful servants of the Lord. The happy hour had at last arrived for the martyr to shed his blood, his soul took its flight to the mansions of everlasting bliss and the chants of those heavenly spirits detailed to conduct him thereto were heard by his guard. But strange to imagine when they mentioned these circumstances to the governor his rage became only the greater. "He is not any longer," cried he, "in our power, but his victory is still incomplete. His body is yet in our hands and on that we can exercise the chastisement which the offender merited while alive. Let the body then be cast to the dogs; it is my will that not a particle of it should remain that might become the object of popular superstition." In this the impious official's designs were completely but miraculously thwarted, for restrained by a divine impulse neither beast nor bird dared to molest the sacred remains. Nay even one of the latter kept faithful watch and ward thereof. Still unchanged in his iniquitous purpose, the governor next ordered the body to be cast into the sea. But here too the hand of divine providence interposed in behalf of his servant. For after the governor's orders had been faithfully executed, the weight attached to the body instead of dragging it to the

bottom of the deep as intended, floated lightly on the surface of the waters and moved in the direction of the shore where, when the precious remains had arrived, they were joyfully received by the faithful and carefully preserved as the most venerable of relics.

The death of Vincent, which happened in February of the year 304, was shortly after followed by that of Eulalia, a virgin of noble birth and whose name is still held in great veneration in the Spanish Church. This young spouse of Christ was only twelve years of age at the time of which I speak. From her earliest infancy she evinced a remarkable disposition for virtue and avoided most sedulously every thing that could tarnish the beauty of her soul. When the persecution inaugurated under Diocletian spread itself over the country and was claiming its victims in every locality, Eulalia, like many of the great servants of God, was inflamed with an ardent desire of giving her life in behalf of divine truth. The natural affection and tender love of her amiable mother prevented for a time the accomplishment of this her most ardent desire. But Eulalia's love for her divine spouse triumphing at last over filial affection, she found means of eluding the domestic restraint and thus unimpeded in her desire she hastened before the governor to make a declaration of her belief in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Arriving in the presence of that official with a courage and fortitude worthy of one of riper years, she thus addressed that functionary of the law: "Pardon me, my Lord, but what madness urges you thus to ruin souls. Why taking advantage of the weakness of so many unfortunate dost thou force them to prostrate themselves before gods made by the hands of men and so renounce Him who is the author of all things? Since you seek Christians, I am a Christian, nay more, I am an enemy of your idols. Were they here I should tram-

ple upon them. I am come to declare that I shall not adore any but one God. Isis is nothing, Apollo is nothing, Venus is nothing, even Maximian your emperor is nothing. The former are nothing, because being made either of an olive branch or a block of marble, and the latter is nothing because he adores this marble and this branch. Let your emperor be the master of the world, in my regard he shall be the least of men as long as I behold him bend the knee before wood or stone. Let him place his diadem at their feet, but let him not pretend to subject the free and the noble-hearted to such baseness." Such freedom and boldness of speech, it is not difficult to understand, excited beyond measure the anger of the governor. In his rage he ordered the youthful virgin to be seized and treated with the utmost opprobrium. His commands were readily executed. The ministers of his impiety immediately seized the tender girl and showered upon her innumerable blows. This was indeed nought but what she desired, for not only was she willing to part with her blood but with her life for her heavenly spouse. Amid all her tortures not a tear rolled from her eyes nor a sigh escaped her lips. Her only expression, while her body was being lacerated under the rod of the executioners, being, "They are engraving, O Lord, on my body Thy victories. Your name, my divine Savior shines forth in characters of blood." Finding that bodily suffering could not conquer her generous spirit, the governor ordered her to be burned to death, which sentence was immediately carried into effect.

Of the numbers that thus perished under the rule of Dacian it would be impossible to form an accurate estimate. They are thought to be as many as those that suffered at Rome or Carthage.

The sufferings of the Christians in Gaul at this epoch were not so great as those of their brethren in Spain.

This was in consequence of that country being more directly under the control of the humane Constantius. Except in the instance of Crispin governor of Vienne, the edict of Diocletian did not find an active application under any of the other officers of the province. Crispin was led to follow this iniquitous course with the view of obtaining the favor of the author of the decree. And of the extent to which he carried his intolerance, the reader may learn from the following extract from the Acts of St. Feriol: "He was to be seen daily, seated on his tribunal and surrounded by a number of counsellors who, breathing only impiety and rage, loaded with honors and favors those of the Christians who basely betrayed their God and their religion, and overwhelmed on the other hand with affronts, ignominy and tortures those who remained faithful to both one and the other."

It was under this governor and at this time that St. Julien of Briaude, St. Peregrin of Auxerre and Jovinian of the same church were martyred for the faith, The brutality that attended the death of Julien was even more marked than in the case of the others. Without the poor form of a trial, Crispin, having learned that he had withdrawn from the locality, despatched his troops to seek and slay him wherever discovered. Julien learning this, took no means of escape but like his divine Master approached to meet his enemies and, having obtained a few moments for prayer, offered his head to the executioner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DIOCLETIAN, MAXIMIAN AND GALERIUS DETERMINED TO ERADICATE CHRISTIANITY OUT OF THE EMPIRE—VAST NUMBERS PERISH EVERY-WHERE—ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN PROVINCES—PERSECUTION IN THE WEST—DIOCLETIAN ABDICATES—MAXIMIAN ALSO ABDICATES—GALERIUS' ATROCITIES—HE CONDEMNS THE CHRISTIANS TO UNIVERSAL SLAUGHTER UNLESS THEY APOSTATIZE BY PARTAKING OF FOOD OFFERED TO THE IDOLS.

While that part of the empire subject to Constantius was comparatively free from the application of the recent edict, the other divisions were drenched in the blood of the faithful. Diocletian, Maximian and Galerius had set themselves, with a determination purely diabolical, to eradicate the Christian faith from every part of their dominions. It was man or rather the demon measuring his strength with the Deity. Every expedient that malice could suggest or artifice supply was called into action for the accomplishment of this purpose. Sympathy seemed to have abandoned the breasts of the rulers. Africa, Egypt and the Thebais became especially remarkable in the contest. The object of the emperors being the utter destrution of the Christian religion, neither age, sex nor rank could claim any exception. It was either apostasy or death. Concealment alone was the only protection against the rage of the tyrant. In Africa the storm swept over the land with exceeding fierceness, overturning many churches and making many apostates. Every-where the demon had his triumph; numbers fell and shamefully abandoned the faith at the sight of the torments prepared for them by their enemies. Hundreds who had spent their lives in religion and grown

gray in the service of God, were now weak enough to offer incense to the demon. Mothers performed the same act for their children and guardians for their wards. To add to their degradation, these unfortunate apostates were compelled to demolish the temples of the living God, to burn the Sacred Scriptures, and thus to exhibit before the populace an incontestable proof of their crime. The numbers, however, that scornfully rejected these shameful and degrading alternatives were, it is pleasing to think, exceedingly great.*

In the Thebais, upwards of five hundred perished at this time under the governor Arrien. The tortures undergone by these are shocking to relate. Aseclas, one of the number, on being presented to the governor, was condemned to the rack and so cruelly mangled that the flesh hung in shreds from his body. Lighted torches were next applied to his bleeding, mangled sides, and when this was found insufficient to conquer his faith, he was cast into the Nile with a great weight attached to his neck. Immediately after this execution, all the inhabitants of a certain Christian village named Antinone were arrested by order of the same authority. Amongst these were seven and thirty members of the clergy, all of whom died for the faith. But how inscrutable are not the decrees of divine providence! Arrien, who thus persecuted the faithful, like another Saul was conquered by divine grace and converted into an Apostle of truth. It is not known what was the immediate cause of his conversion nor indeed is it at all important to learn. Enough for us to know is that there resulted therefrom the happiest consequences, for the Christians now seeing their former intolerant enemy amongst their most fervent adorers, were supplied with new courage and inflamed with new zeal in the cause of divine truth.

* See Belouino, Hist. Des Martyres, p. 249.

Other parts of the country suffered equally as the Thebais. At Carthage, the pro-consul Amilius proceeded against the Christians in a manner entirely novel. In obedience to the commands of his imperial masters, he required the possessors of the Sacred Scriptures to resign them into his hands under pain of imprisonment and death. By a like act of impiety the churches every-where were ordered to be destroyed and the assemblies to be discontinued. This was the expiring effort on the part of the demons to thwart the designs of the Son of God and to eradicate the faith from the hearts of the believers. But in vain did the evil one suggest this artifice, for rather than resign the divine word into the hands of the unbelievers, numbers cheerfully hastened to torture and death. At Abitine, a town at some distance from Carthage, nine and forty of the faithful were arrested: their only crime was having assembled to celebrate the divine mysteries on the Lord's Day. They were immediately despatched to the capital and subjected to torture. Their intrepid replies during their sufferings evinced very clearly the purity of their faith and the graces by which they were sustained. It is true an exception was found in the number; but this brought out only the stronger the firmness and resolution of the others. Fundanus, a former bishop of the place, alarmed at the tortures in store for him, shamefully yielded to the solicitations of the authorities and placed the Sacred Scriptures in their hands. No palliation can be offered for so unworthy an act; it would have been condemnable in the highest degree even in a laic; but in the case of an ecclesiastic it was unpardonable. Nor was heaven long in exhibiting its displeasure against so treacherous a deed, for as the traitor was about to cast the divine word into the flames, the heavens, which till then were profoundly serene, became presently overcast, and from the rapidly gathering clouds there was discharged such a quantity of rain as extinguished the fire,

a circumstance which was immediately followed by a damaging hail which ravaged the entire country around. Therein may be readily recognized the displeasure of the Lord against the indignity offered to his divine word. But in the eyes of the believers it was not regarded as such; they had eyes, and they saw not; ears, and they heard not.

Arrived at Carthage, the sufferings of the confessors may be said to have begun. Datife one of the number and a man of high repute in his community, was the first to be placed on the rack. While his sides were being torn by iron hooks to extort from him an abjuration of his faith, Thecla another of the number, inflamed with an ardent desire of giving evidence to the cause of divine truth, burst through the crowd and exclaimed in a loud and firm voice, "We are all Christians, we have been all at the mysteries!" This sudden and unexpected interruption disconcerted for the moment the procedure of the trial and diverted the tyrant's attention from Datife, so that the blows that would have fallen upon him were now administered to Thecla who was cast upon the wheel and broken in every member. To all this the saint only answered by prayer, addressing her Lord and Master in such language as this: "It is for you, O Lord Jesus, Son of the living God, that I suffer; hasten to the aid of thy servant." Then while the blood streamed profusely from her numerous wounds, after praying for her tormentors, she addressed the proconsul: "Unhappy being who thus dost outrage your Maker, it is against him you are venting your fury in thus punishing the innocent." Thus she continued to reproach her executioners until it being feared that she might expire under her torments she was ordered to be released and cast into prison.

Meantime her companion and fellow-sufferer Datife awaited his turn on the rack. He had not long to delay nor

were his sufferings diminished but rather augmented by the defeat that the tyrant had sustained in the case of St. Thecla. The courage and constancy of the martyr, however, were proof against all. The rack and the iron-hooks did their work, yet the saint remained unshaken. Saturnius a priest was next added to the list and with the same happy result for the fortitude displayed by him was similar to that of Datife and Thecla. Thus each in turn continued to give evidence of the faith that was in him, until weary with torturing to no avail, the baffled consul remanded all to prison. How glorious for the champions of truth to have thus by the aid of divine grace conquered their implacable adversary.

From Numidia, another band of generous athletes were at that time forwarded to Anulus. Their crime like those that preceded them, was in not having obeyed the behest of the emperor, in abstaining from divine service on Sunday. The result of the measure adopted in the case of those of whom I have spoken, made it most evident to the consul that if success were be obtained it must be by more stringent and severer measures than those already employed. The rack, the lash, the iron-hooks, had all been tried but to no purpose, in the past. Something more was now needed if the constancy of the Christians was to be shaken. Accordingly the newly arrived, after the ordinary torture of the rack and tearing of their bodies, had lighted torches applied to their sides. The scalp was torn from their heads and when this was insufficient they were placed on red-hot iron grates and whipped with leathern thongs. This not being sufficiently efficacious the fingers were torn from the hands and sharp spikes thrust into the feet, after which as they still persevered in their noble resolution, salt mixed with lime and vinegar was rubbed into their numerous wounds, causing as may be readily imagined the most exquisite torture.

The circumstances attending the triumph of some of these martyrs rendered their victory more remarkable still Not only were the flesh, the world and the demon opposed to them, but they had to contend against the tenderest and strongest passions of the human heart, which powerfully appealed to them to abandon their purpose. The case of Crispina, an illustrious matron of Lagara in Numidia, is an apposite example of this. Born of patrician parents and nurtured in the lap of luxury, added to the natural weakness of her sex, caused her to be regarded by the enemies of religion, as an easy prey for their artifice. The numerous family, too, which she had at the time, the fruit of several years of happy married existence, was an additional impediment that stood in her way and strongly solicited her to comply with the emperor's orders. Nothing in short was wanting in her case that could strongly attach her to the world and incline her to a ready compliance with all that was demanded. These, however, and other such like impediments were insufficient to prevent her from professing openly her faith in the Redeemer. The words of her heavenly Master, "If any one love father or mother, brother or sister, more than me, he is not worthy of me," never came home to her with such a fullness and plenitude of meaning as then. She loved indeed her children, she loved her life, she loved her home and the world; but it was in God and for God. To be faithful to her Maker, to listen to his divine voice, to sacrifice all at his command, was the first and dominant aspiration of her soul. In truth, she could have said with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our

Lord."* During the interrogatory her tranquillity and self-reliance, never for a moment abandoned her. When reminded of the recent edict and commanded to sacrifice to the emperors, Crispina's answer was: "I have never sacrificed and never shall, except to one God and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born and suffered for us. I shall suffer willingly for my faith, whatever you command." Seeing that he could not prevail, the consul ordered her to be executed, a sentence which was immediately carried into effect at Thebaste in Numidia, on the nones of December.

In some instances the Almighty came to the aid of the holy virgins and rescued them from the hands of their tormentors. The case of Theodora of Alexandria is an instance of this. Being brought before the prefect and threatened with being exposed in a bagnio according to the emperor's orders, in case she refused to sacrifice to the gods, her noble and confiding answer was: "The Savior will not suffer his dove to fall into the clutches of the falcon." In effect the brutal prefect commanded the trembling virgin to be placed in a brothel. Her words, as she was forced into the dread abode, were a prayer of protection to her Maker. Raising her eyes towards heaven, she exclaimed: "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, aid me and withdraw me from this place of infamy. You, who delivered St. Peter and who withdrew him from prison before he suffered, grant that I may depart hence pure and unsullied, in order that all may know that I have the honor of belonging to you." Attracted by the opportunity offered, a crowd of youthful debauchees had assembled and already regarded as their certain prey the trembling virgin. But God was not unmindful of his servant. He sent one who was to deliver his spouse. Amongst the dissolute youths gathered on the occasion and ready to carry their evil

* Romans, chap. viii., 38.

intentions into effect, was a Christian of much courage and sanctity. Inspired by God, he came to rescue Theodora, by stratagem. Attiring himself in the dress of a soldier and putting on the air and manners of a reckless pagan, he entered boldly before his companions. As the horror-striken virgin fled from his presence and eluded his advance, the virtuous youth addressed her thus: "Fear not my sister, I am not what I appear. I am one of the brethren disguised in order to rescue you from infamy. I am come to save the spouse of my Lord. Take my garments and give me yours; thus disguised save yourself." Theodora readily recognized the hand of God, she did as commanded, and with her deliverer's hat pressed low upon her brow, she hastened from the house and was shortly beyond the reach of her enemies.

Meantime a ludicrous scene occurred in the apartment she quitted. Another of the party having entered and finding a man instead of a woman fled in alarm from his presence, being impressed with the idea that the Almighty had operated a miracle in favor of his servant, by changing her sex! "Often," said he to his companions, "have I heard how water was changed into wine by the God of the Christians, but I always regarded it as a fable. Now, however, I have no difficulty in the matter, for to change a woman into a man is surely more difficult than to change water into wine." Laboring under this strange hallucination he rushed precipitately from the place lest, as he said, the God of the Christians might also change him into one of the opposite sex, and not even very certain that that had not been already effected! The innocent subject of all this alarm, unwilling that the idea of a false miracle should get abroad, immediately corrected the error and explained how the matter had happened. The only change said he that has occurred is that I have a crown which I had not before. The

lewd pagan multitude, seeing how they were outwitted, became highly incensed and hastened the youth into the presence of the prefect. There his constancy was as remarkable as his courage had been great in the matter related. As a reward for his fidelity he received the glorious crown of the martyrs.

While these things were happening in the East, the persecution was raging with all its violence in the West. It is true history has not handed down to us, except in a few instances, the names of the brave soldiers of Christ who died at this date in defense of the faith. The reason is because of the impossibility of collecting the Acts, as also on account of the vigilance of the authorities in destroying the same. The fact of a period of three years having elapsed after the death of Pope Marcellus before a successor could be elected, is sufficiently indicative of the precautions taken by the authorities to prevent the free action of the Church. In the face of this stern opposition, however, the names of some who suffered have been carefully preserved. Amongst these may be mentioned Beatrice, Soterus, Pancratius and Basil at Rome; Nabor, Felix and Victor at Milan; and Vitalis and Agricola at Bologna.

In Pannonia and Austria, the persecution was no less severe. At Sirmium, Ireneus bishop of the place and Montanus a priest were put to death by order of the governor, while at Lorch in upper Austria forty of the faithful were cast into prison.* Others in order to avoid the fury the persecutors were obliged to fly to the mountains and to hide themselves amid the rocks and in the caves. At Augsburgh, the persecution was more violent still.† Daily, numbers were dragged to death. It was there that one of those miraculous occurrences happened of which we occasionally meet with an instance in history.

* Belouino. † Ibid.

Amongst those dragged before the idols and required to offer sacrifice was a certain courtesan named Afree. Touched by divine grace, though her life had been a scandal to all, she recoiled from the idea of denying her Savior. When commanded to offer the customary sacrifice her answer was: "My sins are already sufficiently numerous, without my adding to the number. I hope I shall never do what you demand of me." Irritated beyond measure the heartless judge then pronounced her sentence in the following words: "We order that the courtesan Afree known to all the inhabitants of Augsburgh as an infamous prostitute and who furthermore claims to be a Christian, be burned alive for having refused to sacrifice to the immortal gods." The dread sentence was carried into effect on an island in the river Lech. As the flames began to do their work the martyr broke out into prayer thanking her Redeemer for having deigned to receive her in sacrifice. Not less remarkable was the conduct of two of her companions in sin who, inspired by her heroic example, gave a like testimony to the faith and received as their recompense a like reward.

During the same year, 304, and by virtue of the same edict, Philip, bishop of Theraclea in Thrace, suffered a like punishment, being burned alive at the stake. But more notable still was the application of the edict in Phrygia where the inhabitants of an entire town were, without exception, committed to the flames.*

Such was the condition of affairs at the time of which we are speaking, when it pleased the Almighty to considerably modify the heat of the persecution. The event that tended chiefly to this was the abdication of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian. At the close of year 303, Diocletian quitted Rome for Nicomedia. Arrived there, his

* Belouino.

adopted son Galerius employed all his art to obtain from the aged monarch a resignation of his dignity. To this end he advanced several reasons, amongst others the emperor's age, his declining health, the necessity of enjoying repose, and lastly the example of Nerva in favor of Trajan. To all this the emperor answered by alleging the impropriety of ending his days in a private capacity. He was willing indeed to grant his tormentor the title of Cæsar; but Galerius ambitioned still more. He aimed at being emperor and nothing short of it would satisfy him. The conference ended unpleasantly to both, for Galerius declared that unless his desires were complied with, he would be necessitated to look after his interests. Diocletian could not conceal from himself the import and menacing nature of this language. It was a threat and he saw no way of avoiding it but by divesting himself of the supreme authority. His humiliation was complete when for colleague or second Cæsar, Galerius presented to him an inexperienced, uncouth youth named Dana. But the situation was grave and demanded immediate action. Accordingly on the first of May in the presence of the entire army and a vast multitude of citizens, Diocletian divested himself of the imperial purple and clothed Galerius therewith.

On the same day at Milan, Maximian abdicated in favor of Constance. The supreme power thus passed from bad to worse hands. It was indeed a sad day for the Church when Galerius was invested with the supreme command. Diocletian's atrocities were in a measure humane compared with his. Ordinarily he punished the Christians by fire, and lest their tortures might be ended too quickly he had ordered the fire to be slowly applied, at first, to the extremities and then, in the shape of flaming torches to the sides. With the same object, of prolonging their miseries, the un-

happy victims were supplied during the fearful ordeal, with water that nature might not too rapidly sink under the torments. In short when the extremities were consumed and the fire had reached the vital parts, the mutilated victims were cast into a blazing furnace or brazier in order to be completely consumed so that the Christians might not have an opportunity of venerating their remains. Could human ingenuity or diabolical malice suggest anything further?

It was not against the Christians merely that Galerius vented his rage. He was by nature a monster of cruelty. Having deprived the people of their rights and privileges, he proscribed the arts and sciences, banished the learned and abolished the laws. Instead of civil administrators of justice, he appointed military judges whose only principles in the execution of the duties of their office were waywardness, impulse and self-interest. Against the Christians the monster's cruelty knew no bounds.

In the year 306 he issued another edict bloodier and more intolerant than any that had hitherto appeared. By it the faithful at large were condemned to universal slaughter, except on the condition of partaking of the food offered to the idols. All through the empire, orders were immediately despatched commanding universal obedience. Heralds traversed the streets of every city and the highways of every province, making known the will of the prince and commanding obedience thereto. The local authorities on the other hand possessing lists of the inhabitants, summoned all in turn to comply with the iniquitous demand. It is not difficult to understand how a system of this nature must have worked. No escaping or concealment was possible. It was at once either apostasy or death. For all the latter would indeed have been a gain and it proved so for the males. But the females, being

reserved to minister to the sensual pleasures of their cruel tormentors, were denied the poor privilege of dying for their faith. Not contented with these sanguinary measures, the better to discover the Christians and thereby to eradicate the faith from the world, it was made obligatory on all to refuse protection to a believer and even to denounce him. Thus came to be witnessed the horrid and unnatural spectacle of children betraying their parents and husbands their wives. Never before was the world obliged to behold such lamentable scenes. It was the dark hour that preceded the dawn of day: the evil one was making his last desperate effect to uphold his tottering kingdom. A little more and the light of the Gospel truth would burst in upon a benighted pagan world.

Amongst those who suffered at this time were Eutropius, Theodorus and Cleonicus. The death they were compelled to undergo reveals very clearly the rage of their enemies; for when every artifice had failed in the vain endeavour to make them abandon their faith, the judge ordered boiling pitch to be poured over their bodies. By the special protection of heaven, however, what was intended for their torment failed entirely in its object, the boiling fluid not leaving the slightest mark upon them or causing them the least pain. But even this was insufficient to open the eyes of the pagans who still thirsted for their blood, and failed to behold in their miraculous preservation the power of the Most High. They were accordingly ordered to be crucificed—an ordeal which they cheerfully endured as making their suffering more like that of their heavenly Master.

Basilicus another of the same noble band of martyrs was made to suffer in a different fashion. His feet were encased in iron boots through which protruded in the interior the sharp points of numerous nails. On these he was obliged

to walk for several miles being scourged by the guards whenever he failed to advance on his way to Comanus, whither he was being led for execution. The Almighty came visibly to his aid by means of a miracle. While chained, exposed to the burning rays of the noon-day sun, awaiting the convenience of his guards who had retired for refreshment, suddenly the instruments of his torture were broken asunder, an event which was immediately followed by an alarming earthquake. For a time the miraculous occurrence disconcerted the unbelievers, but presently resuming their usual indifference they continued to heap upon the martyr their accustomed indignities. At last arriving at Comanus and refusing to sacrifice to the gods, he was beheaded for the faith and his body cast into the river.

Of the sufferings undergone by the others at this epoch, the torments inflicted on Appien may be taken for an example. This was a young man in the flower of youth, whose temerity drew upon him the rage of the persecutors. Being in Cæsarea, while the officers of the law were searching for the Christians and compelling them by violence to attend at the sacrifices, this saintly young man inspired by the Lord, in a transport of zeal hastened through the crowd and seizing the chief sacrificer's hand, exclaimed, "Knowest not thou that it is the height of impiety and of folly, to render to idols that worship which is due to the Almighty!" This bold and intrepid act drew upon him all the rage and violence of the authorities. He was presently seized, fallen upon, covered with wounds, brutally maltreated, and consigned to a dungeon. After a day and a night spent in that state, he was arraigned before the tribunal of his enemies, and commanded to sacrifice. On refusing to comply with the iniquitous demand, he was so horribly maltreated as to be hardly recognizable as a hu-

man being. Iron hooks tore the flesh in great morsels from his body, and furrowed it in every direction, while the blows of the leaden instrument administered to his head rendered it a shapeless mass. But this was insufficient to appease the cruelty of his tormentors; they would glut their rage still farther upon him. Accordingly at this stage his feet were enveloped in cloths steeped in oil and set on fire. The frightful tortures this must have caused the glorious martyr, the reader will readily learn on being assured that the extremities melted fairly away. The torture, however, terrible though it was, failed to shake his noble resolve. Thus baffled by a youth only just above puberty, the governor remanded him to prison, where after enduring the tortures of a protracted martyrdom during three whole days, he was ultimately brought forth, and, when about to expire, was cast into the sea. His death was as glorious as his sufferings were remarkable, for the Almighty attested by a miraculous occurrence the sanctity of his servant. Hardly had the body been cast into the deep, according to the order of the governor, than the entire sea became alarmingly disturbed. A wind accompanied with a great noise, mingling with the clash and roar of contending waves, ensued. Cæsarea was shaken to its foundation. And then amid this convulsion of nature, the body of the martyr was seen borne aloft on the crest of the waves and deposited gently at the walls of the city.

About the same time, St. Ulpian was martyred at Tyr. His death was, if possible, more horrible than that of the youth of whom I have spoken. After being subjected to the lash and otherwise cruelly tortured, he was enclosed in a sack in company with a dog and a serpent, and cast into the sea. The sufferings and martyrdom of Accacius were equally glorious for the Church at this epoch. Born of a Christian stock distinguished for the

number of priests it had given to the ministry, and educated under the care of pious ecclesiastics, he had early implanted in his breast the noblest sentiments of virtue, and acquired in this manner that firmness of character so essential to success in the hour of trial. Having engaged in the profession of arms, he had the pain of beholding the defection of his companions in unworthy submission to the commands of authority. In vain, however, did Firmius his commander endeavor to engage him in the worship of idols. Finding his efforts to be fruitless he intrusted Accacius to the charge of a subordinate named Bitien. This pliant tool endeavored by still greater violence to reduce the saint to submission. To accomplish this he had him unmercifully scourged until the blood ran in streams from all parts of his body. During the inhuman process the only words that escaped the martyr's lips were an oft-repeated invocation of the Savior, and a petition not to be abandoned by Him. When asked, at the end of much suffering, if he were ready to comply with the emperor's orders, and to sacrifice to the gods, his answer was: "Your torments have rendered me stronger and bolder than before. At the beginning I regarded them with fear and trouble. But now that I know what it is to suffer for Christ, I experience in myself such a joy and feel such courage granted to me by God, that I abandon myself to him with confidence and without reserve, ready to suffer whatever he may please." This was too independent and unexpected for Bitien. It inflamed his rage only the more, and not conceiving at the moment any greater or higher indignity, he ordered the saint's jaws to be broken. In this agonizing condition he was loaded with chains and cast into prison, where in solitary confinement, with no gentle hand to staunch his bleeding wounds, no loving attendant to offer consolation in his protracted martyrdom, he looked forward to the moment

when the privilege would be granted him of dying for the faith. After some time spent in this manner he was despatched in company with others to Byzantium. On the way in consequence of the ill-treatment sustained, and the absence of the necessary means of support, he was about to expire. But the Almighty reserved him in order to shew forth the divine mercy and love in behalf of the good. For being cast into prison on arriving at Byzantium, he was visited by angels and cured entirely of his wounds. When seven days later he was presented anew before his tormentor, so altered was his appearance that Bitien could hardly believe it. The miraculous change, however, made little or no impression on the judge, and failed to open his eyes to the light of divine truth. He was then more enraged than before, and ordered the confessor to be clubbed and broken in all his members, after which finding him still of his former mind, he had his head striken off, on the 8th of May.

The time was now close at hand when, in the disposition of divine providence, peace was to be restored to the Church. Constantine, the son of Constantius, instead of repairing to the court of his father in the West, had remained in the service of Diocletian and signalized himself by his valor in Egypt and Persia. His increasing popularity with the people and the soldiers caused him to be regarded with jealousy by Galerius. His danger accordingly increased with his popularity. Of this he was fully aware and to avoid the dangerous consequences sought to withdraw from his perilous position. To visit his father was a most legitimate excuse for withdrawing from court; but Galerius was unwilling to comply with so reasonable a demand. He found pretexts, as always one can who is so disposed, for refusing the permission. Importunate, however, Constantine finally extorted a reluctant permission.

That Galerius never intended it to be carried into effect, subsequent circumstances clearly denote. For when made aware of the prince's departure without the formality of a final adieu, he flew into a terrible rage and ordered him to be pursued and brought back. Constantine had forecast the possibility of such a contingency and had made provision accordingly. Departing from Nicomedia during the night, he travelled with all haste through Bithynia and Thrace on his way into Italy and Gaul, destroying everywhere or rendering lame the horses along the route that thus he might make it impossible for his pursuers to come up with him. The precaution was not unavailing and probably saved him from capture and death. He arrived at Boulogne by the time his father was starting for Britain. A few months later on the death of his parent at York, he found himself emperor. This was the great ambition of his life. Cold, reserved, severe in morals, and with lofty aspirations for power, he ever looked forward to the throne as the ultimate end of all his hopes. The first act of the new emperor was to forward according to custom his effigy adorned with the customary marks of the imperial dignity to his colleague in power. Galerius at first refused to receive it; but being better advised and assured by his counsellors that a persistence in his purpose might lead to a defection of the army, he consented in view of his personal interest to receive the proffered mark of respect. It was thus that in the eternal decrees of the Most High the way was being prepared for the subsequent peace and tranquillity of the Church. Arrived at the supreme power, one of the first acts of the new emperor was an edict in favor of the Christians, permitting them to open their churches and assemble for the purpose of divine worship. This the reader will remember affected only that part of the empire subject to his authority, namely Spain, Gaul

and Britain. The same blessing was shortly after extended to Italy, even before Constantine brought it under his subjection. But the toleration thus granted was chiefly if not entirely the result of political speculation. It had for its object the strengthening of Maxentius' pretentions, whose father as we have seen had but lately divested himself of the purple in favor of Severus. A spreading discontent, caused on account of excessive taxation and the absence of the emperor, enabled Maxentius to form a party and seize upon the sovereign power. To favor his designs by conciliating all to his interests the decree of toleration to which I allude was immediately promulgated. Meantime the other parts of the empire subject to Galerius continued as before to be sorely afflicted. The Acts still extant are undeniable evidence of this. Thus at Edessa in Mesopotamia there suffered on the 15th of November 306, SS. Gurie and Samone. These were two solitaries who lived apart from the world in continual prayer and penance. Their retired penetential life, however, did not save them from the vigilance of their persecutors. They were arrested and brought before Mussonius the governor of Mesopotamia. This officer after vainly trying threats and promises in the endeavor to get them to abandon their holy religion proceeded in fine to acts of open violence. He had his two victims suspended in the air by the hands, with weights attached to their feet. In this painful position they were made to remain for several hours—from nine in the morning till two in the afternoon. They were next cast into a dungeon where they remained for three days and three nights without food or drink. Though thus weakened and exhausted by torture and the want of all nourishment, their courage was yet as unshaken as ever. Cited anew before the governor's tribunal they generously and bravely confessed again the Lord Jesus Christ and

declared their intentions of never abandoning their holy resolution. The tyrant was not yet satisfied and employed for their perversion another species of torture. He got them suspended in the air by one foot, a torture which was further increased in the case of Samone by a heavy weight being attached to the other limb. This was followed by another incarceration which was as little successful as the first in shaking the constancy of the martyrs. At last, seeing that he could not succeed in his iniquitous purpose, he condemned them to be beheaded—a sentence which they cheerfully underwent on the date above mentioned.

It was in the same year that Appius suffered in Cæsarea. There are circumstances attaching to this martyr's death which render it especially interesting and deserving of notice. It was customary on the occasion of great entertainments given by the emperor, or in his honor, to signalize the occasion by some specially exciting event. The emperor and his court entered as heartily into this as the people themselves. The celebration to which I allude was one given by the emperor for the amusement of the populace. The place where it was held was the city of Cæsarea. Those charged with its management had orders to spare nothing in rendering it worthy of the occasion. Beasts of great proportions and extraordinary ferocity were brought from the most distant parts—from Africa, Egypt and the Indies. Gladiators, too, were present in considerable numbers. But what was to give zest to the whole and what was especially reserved to gratify the eye of the tyrant, was the death of a Christian. This was the great crowning scene, the most exciting part of the bloody drama, that was sure to draw the loudest applause from the heartless spectators. What rendered the deed of blood the more noteworthy and suggestive, was the manner in which it was done. Attached to a criminal, who was convicted of murdering his master,

Appius was led into the amphitheatre. Both were destined for the beasts of the arena; but from an impulse of generosity on the part of the emperor the murderer obtained his release and was thus literally delivered from the jaws of death. Plaudits immediately arose from the multitude extolling the emperor's magnanimity and lavishing praises upon him for his generosity and humanity in thus pardoning the guilty. But in singular contrast, the same lips that applauded the pardon of the guilty, clamored vociferously for the punishment of the innocent. It was the Jewish cry repeated again: "Restore to us Barabbas and let Christ be crucified." In short, while the multitude prepared itself for the feast of blood, Appius was presented to the beasts and torn into pieces thus receiving the object of his ambition—the crown of the martyr.

The same year 306 witnessed at Antioch the death of Saint Pelagie, who by an impulse of divine grace, to save herself from the brutalities of a lustful soldiery, cast herself from the housetop, as the virgins Prodasce and Bernice, under a like influence, threw themselves into a river and were drowned.

CHAPTER XIX.

GALERIUS' GREAT CRUELTIES—ACCOUNT BY AN EYE-WITNESS—MAXIMIAN IS PUNISHED BY HEAVEN—GALERIUS IS ALSO PUNISHED—HE REPENTS OF HIS MISDEEDS AND ISSUES AN EDICT OF TOLERATION—LICINIUS PERSECUTES THE FAITHFUL—PROHIBITS THE ERECTION OF CHURCHES AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF THE FAITHFUL—THE THRONE OF THE EMPIRE IS CONTESTED—CONSTANTINE AND MAXENTIUS CLAIMANTS—THE CROSS APPEARS TO CONSTANTINE—DEFEAT OF MAXENTIUS.

While the cruelties recorded in the preceding chapter were being perpetrated, the political affairs of the empire were undergoing important changes. The usurpation by Maxentius, as we have seen, of thesovereign power in Rome highly incensed Galerius. He would have readily hastened to Italy and have reduced the usurper to his former condition, but not trusting too confidently to the means at his disposal, he left to Severus what he himself would have done under more favorable circumstances. Severus, who was then in northern Italy, lost no time in setting out for the capital. He had not counted upon the risks he was taking. The danger to him was not so much in the strength of the enemy as in the unloyalty of his own. Hardly had he entered on his march when symptoms of this nature began to appear, and by the time he reached the walls of Rome, he had the mortification of seeing himself abandoned by the flower of his army who went over to the enemy. The fact that these troops had been previously under the command of Maxentius' father, and quartered for a considerable time in Rome, where the gay life of the inhabitants had furnished them many occasions of pleasure, may be as-

signed as the cause of their defection. Finding himself thus abandoned, Severus was necessitated to seek safety in flight. But to add to his misfortune he encountered in his retreat Maxentius' troops from whom he sought safety within the walls of Ravenna. The strength of this place, and it being provisioned for such an emergency, offered him for the time a secure asylum and relieved him from every anxiety of danger until such time as Galerius could hasten to his rescue. But distrusting the remnant of his troops and confiding in the sworn promises of Maxentius that he should be honorably treated, he divested himself of the purple and became a prisoner of war. Maxentius was false to his engagements; he treated the fallen emperor as a captive, dragged him as a trophy of victory to Rome, and had him beheaded on the Appian Way.

The defeat and death of Severus inflamed still more the rage of Galerius and inspired him with the resolution of capturing Rome, and dethroning the usurper. He accordingly set out with a numerous army, his design being to put the inhabitants to the sword and to raze the city to the ground. Not for a moment did he entertain the idea of suffering defeat; but there was an element of weakness in a quarter he had never suspected. As in the instance of Severus, his troops were disloyal. Arrived before the walls of Rome they refused to obey their commanders, alleging as a reason the impropriety of Romans fighting against Romans. The greater part deserted to Maxentius, leaving Galerius with only a remnant of his former command. With these he hastened rapidly back to the East, pillaging and devastating every-where in his retreat in order to put it out of the power of the enemy to follow him from want of provisions. Thus the haughty and bloodthirsty monarch returned in a very different fashion from what he had set out. He entered on his expedition as a powerful ruler and he

returned as a fugitive and a brigand. The political troubles that thus convulsed the empire, did not secure for the Christians any immunity against suffering. During the four subsequent years up to the period of his fatal sickness, Galerius persecuted the faithful with all the implacable animosity of his revengeful nature. In this he was ably seconded by the governors of Egypt and Palestine. These cruel agents of a cruel monarch were insensible to every sentiment of humanity. Their hatred against the Christians did not always assume the mild form of depriving them immediately of life. They subjected them on the contrary to lingering deaths, for after mutilating their bodies, they compelled them to labor as slaves in the mines. Great numbers were thus necessitated to eke out a miserable existence to which death would be infinitely preferable. The mutilations consisted in houghing the victims, and depriving them of an eye. The account of an eye-witness of what the Christians suffered at Alexandria, is thus given in the words of Phitias, bishop of Thermis: "And what language would suffice to recount their virtues and their fortitude under every trial. For as every one had the liberty to abuse them, some beat them with clubs, some with rods, some with scourges, others, again, with thongs others, with ropes. And the sight of these torments was varied and multiplied, exhibiting excessive malignity. For some had their hands tied behind them and were suspended on the rack and every limb was stretched by a machine. Then the torturers according to their orders applied the pincers to the whole body, not merely, as in the case of murderers, to the sides, but also, to the stomach, the knees, and the cheeks. Some, indeed, were suspended on high by one hand from the Portico, whose sufferings by reason of the distention of their joints and limbs were more dreadful than any. Others were

bound face to face to pillars, not resting upon their feet but forced down by the weight of the body, whilst the pressure of their weight also increased the tension of their cords. And this they endured not merely as long as the governor spoke to them or as long as he had leisure to hear, but nearly the whole day. For when he passed on to others he left some of his subordinate officers to attend to the former, to observe whether any of them, overcome by the torments, desired to surrender." Of those that suffered in Arabia, Eusebius speaks thus: "Some were slain with the axe, some had their limbs fractured as in Cappadocia. Some were suspended by the feet and a little raised from the ground with their heads downward, were suffocated with the ascending smoke of a gentle fire kindled below, as was done to those in Mesopotamia; some were mutilated by having their noses, ears and hands cut off, and the rest of their limbs and parts of their body cut to pieces as was the case in Alexandria," etc. Such is the account given by eye-witnesses whose testimony on account of the positions they occupied as bishops is beyond question. One of the consequences of this dreadful storm was to drive many from the seat of the persecution and to cause them to seek refuge in the desert. But their retirement did not always secure them an immunity from suffering. At a certain place in Egypt a large number of confessors assembled. Thither they were followed by the minions of the law and dragged thence to the number of 97 exclusive of women and children. Being arraigned before the governor of Palestine, they were condemned to be mutilated by having the hamstrings of their right leg cut with a red-hot razor and their right eye dug out with a bodkin! The wounds being cauterized by the applications of fire and caustic, they were sent in this mutilated condition to delve in the mines of the province, where they perished of hunger,

cold and brutal treatment. At a village named Gaza, several others were arrested and a like punishment awarded them. In addition to the houghing and the digging out of an eye, these had their sides most cruelly torn with iron cords. While this inhuman operation was being conducted in the case of a tender virgin, the tyrant threatened her with still greater dishonor by having her placed in a house of ill-fame. To this the noble-hearted girl responded by reproaching the monster with his cruelty, a liberty which so exasperated him that losing all command over his passions he ordered his victim to be immediately cast on the rack, with two others of her companions. After being mangled in a frightful condition, but still persevering in her holy resolution, she was cast, by order of the tyrant, into a glowing brazier, where she consummated a glorious martyrdom.

To the cruelties already related, the tyrant added still others. Even in death he pursued with unrelenting hate the glorious champions of the Cross; for he ordered their bodies to be deprived of burial and thus left to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey. "Whilst aiming," says Eusebius, "his cruelty and madness against the worshippers of the true God, he also went beyond the dictates of nature, not even ashamed to deny the lifeless bodies of these holy men a burial. Night and day he ordered the dead bodies to be carefully watched as they lay exposed in the open air the food of beasts; and there was no small number of men present several days, of such as attended to his savage and barbarous decree, and some indeed were looking out from their posts of observation, as if it were something worthy of their zeal to see that the dead bodies should not be stolen. But wild beasts, dogs, and carnivorous birds of prey scattered the human limbs here and there in all directions, and the whole city around was spread *with the entrails* and bones

of men, so that nothing ever appeared more dreadful or horrific even to those who before had been most hostile to us. They did not indeed so much lament the calamity of those against whom these things were done as the *nuisance against themselves*, and the abuse heaped upon our common nature. For at the very gates of the city there was an exhibition presented dreadful beyond all description and tragic recital—human flesh devoured not in one place only but scattered over every place; for it is said that limbs and masses of flesh and parts of entrails were to be seen even within the gates, which things continuing to occur for many days a strange event like the following took place. The air happened to be clear and bright and the aspect of the whole heavens was most severe. Then suddenly from the greater part of the columns that supported the public porticos issued drops like tears,"* etc.

These dreadful and unheard-of cruelties were earning for their authors a terrible retribution at the hands of the Lord. Maximian was the first to experience the divine displeasure. With the view of resuming the chief command in the western provinces of the empire he resolved upon compassing the death of his son-in-law—a project he had already fruitlessly attempted on a couple of other occasions. To secure for himself success in his iniquitous purpose he solicited and ostensibly obtained the services of his daughter, Constantine's, wife. The latter feigned to enter into his views, but only to save herself from his fury. Secretly she informed her husband of the contemplated violence which was to be accomplished by Maximian introducing himself into Constantine's apartments and slaying him while asleep. To assure himself of the reality of the plot, on the night determined upon for the deed, Constantine quitted his chamber and placed in his stead one of his slaves. Maxim-

* Eusebius p. 329.

ian punctual to his arrangement entered at the appointed hour and unsuspectingly slew the attendant mistaking him for his master. On retiring he was confronted by his son-in-law who presently condemned him to death leaving the manner of dying to his own selection. He chose strangulation by his own hand. Thus passed from the world, after an inglorious reign of twenty years, another of the greatest persecutors of the Church of Christ.

Galerius was not long in experiencing a like chastisement. Being the instigator, as we have seen, of the persecution endured by the Christians under Diocletian and the author of those undergone by the faithful subject to his own rule, it was fit that his punishment should be as signal as his crimes had been notorious. The affliction with which the Almighty visited him, and which lasted an entire year, consisted of a cancer in the abdomen. It caused him the most intolerable anguish and baffled the skill of the most eminent physicians. In vain did he invoke the aid of those imaginary deities in whose favor he had shed so much innocent blood. In vain did he condemn to death several of his medical attendants on account of their inability to obtain him any relief. The malady assumed only more alarming proportions, the fetid effluvia, meantime, filling the palace and rendering attendance upon him almost impossible. Thus reduced to this frightful condition the unhappy tyrant was at last compelled to recognize, the true God. At intervals, while in a paroxysm of pain, he would cry out, promising amendment and declaring his determination of granting liberty to the Christians. He was inspired probably with these sentiments by the boldness of a Christian physician who frankly declared to him the cause of his misfortune in these heroic words: "Your malady is not an ordinary one nor can it yield to our art. Remember the evils you have done the servants of God. Remember

how wicked you have been and what an enemy of religion you are. From that you may learn whence you are to expect the relief you desire. This is the only remedy I can inform you of. You may deprive me of life as you have done to others, but be assured of it that no human being will ever cure you."

This bold and frank address did not, as might be expected, draw upon its author the afflicted tyrant's rage. It was received by him in good part and acting upon it, Galerius immediately issued the following edict which was formally published in all the provinces subject to his authority: "Although we have been always engaged in promoting the welfare of the state, we have never had any thing so much at heart as the establishment of the ancient order of things, and the conversion of the Christians to the religion of their fathers which they abandoned. For not content with despising the rites instituted by their ancestors, they have gone even so far as to make laws for themselves and to hold assemblies in the provinces. This we have prohibited by our decrees and commanded them to obey. Several through fear have complied with our desires, but many others have refused and have in consequence been punished. But as we are now informed that there is a great number who still persist in their obstinacy and who revere neither the established religion, nor that of the Christians, in consideration of our clemency and in conformity with our usual custom of pardoning all to whom we desire to extend the effects of our goodness, wherefore we permit the Christians to exercise their religion and to hold their assemblies provided they do not commit any offense contrary to the law. In another document we convey instructions to the officers of justice as to how they should act in their regard. Our indulgence should induce them to pray to their God for our health, for the prosper-

ity of the state, as well as for their own safety, so that the empire may exist eternally and that they may enjoy a peaceful and tranquil life."*

The effect of this decree was the immediate and entire suspension of all persecution. The prisons were thrown open, the places of exile abandoned, and the mines evacuated. From every quarter the Christians began to return to their homes and to engage in the rebuilding of their temples, and the practice of their holy religion. The revocation, as far as the tyrant was concerned, came too late. His end had arrived, and so consumed by the horrid distemper, he expired in the greatest agony at his palace in Nicomedia, A. D. 311.

The edict which the late monarch had issued, was partially endorsed by Maximin. He was afraid to oppose his colleague's will; but on the other hand, being an inveterate enemy of the Christians, he contented himself with giving verbal instructions to his representatives to abstain from persecuting. Fabius, prefect of the pretorium, communicated to the governors of the provinces the emperor's pleasure in the following words: "With a most persevering and devoted earnestness their majesties, our sovereigns and august emperors, had formerly directed the minds of all men to live and conduct themselves according to the true and holy way, that even those who appeared to pursue practices foreign to the Roman, should exhibit the proper worship to the immortal gods. But the obstinacy and most unconquerable determination of some, rose to such a pitch that they could neither be induced to recede from their own purpose by a due regard to the imperial command, nor be deterred by the impending punishment inflicted. Since then it has happened that many incurred danger from a practice like this, their majesties our sover-

* See Eusebius, p, 328.

eigns, the most powerful emperors, in their peculiar and exalted piety, deeming it foreign to the purpose of their majesties that men should be exposed to so great a danger for such a cause, have commanded (me in) my devotedness to address (you in) your wisdom that if any of the Christians be found to observe the worship of their people, that you should abstain from molesting or endangering them, nor determine that any one should be punished on such a pretext; as it had been made to appear by the lapse of so long a time that it has been impossible to induce them in any manner to abandon their obstinate course. It is incumbent, therefore, on your attentive care, to write to the governors and magistrates and to the prefects of the districts of every city, that they know that it is not necessary for them to pay any further regard to this edict."

The relief thus obtained by the Christians was only of a very temporary nature. It lasted merely till the death of Galerius, when matters assumed an entirely different aspect. Political considerations, indeed, prevented for the moment Maximin from acting towards the faithful as his inclinations prompted. The probability of having to contend with Licinius for the sovereign power, rendered it impolitic for him to create any enemies. Hence, though supplicated by the pagans of Nicomedia to banish the faithful, he answered evasively to the effect that the petition being only the prayer of a few he could not attend to it. Six months later, matters being satisfactorily arranged with Licinius, the emperor's real disposition appeared. At first he found pretexts for prohibiting the assemblies of the faithful, on sanitary grounds, an injunction which was speedily followed by an order forbidding the erection of churches within the precincts of cities, and sanctioning the ancient decrees. This was virtually revoking the relief granted by Galerius, and subjecting the Christians to the

old conditions of apostasy or death. The document which was engraven on iron and brass and erected through the empire is this: "Now at length the feeble powers of the human mind have prevailed so far as to shake off and to scatter the mists of every error and to dissipate the clouds of delusion, which before this had beset the senses of those who were more miserable than profane, and enveloped them in a destructive darkness and ignorance; thus leading us to acknowledge that all things are regulated and strengthened by the good providence of the immortal gods: which things it is incredible to say how grateful, how delightful and pleasing they are to us, how powerful an evidence they have furnished of your pious resolutions, since before this it could be unknown to none how much regard and reverence you cherished towards the immortal gods." Such was the document by which the Christians were cut off from every hope of practicing their religion. The cant and hypocrisy contained in it cannot escape the notice of the reader. For when it attributes every good gift to the favor of the false gods, it condemns to expatriation without even the shadow of guilt the faithful followers of the Redeemer. Had the tyrant confined himself even to this, his injustice would not be so glaring; but he did not. Together with proscribing the Christians for imaginary crimes, he acted the part of a calumniator, by having false Acts of the life and death of the Savior published and distributed through the empire. The calumnious documents, which were replete with blasphemy against the Son of God, were placed in the hands of the masters and pupils of every school. To overwhelm the believers with still greater odium, the commandant of the city of Damascus had recourse to the following shameful proceeding. He had arrested two women of the town and forced from them a declaration of their being formerly Christians

and witnesses to terrible obscenities perpetrated in the churches. This also was published by order of the emperor and made the plea for perpetrating upon the faithful the most unheard of atrocities, In consequence of these imaginary crimes, and the exceptional arbitary powers conferred upon the authorities, the Christians were every-where subjected to the cruelest persecution. They were driven from their homes, banished from the cities and treated even worse than the beasts of the field. So severe were the measures adopted against them, that this persecution may be almost regarded as the severest on record. To such an extent did those in authority carry their enmity against the believers, that the more moderate of the pagans were touched with compassion, and Constantine was moved to interfere in their behalf. Their sufferings having drawn from him a remonstrance, Maximin could not conveniently afford to alienate so powerful a colleague, and accordingly made an appearance of complying with his request. But it was only an appearance, for while the persecution was ostensibly suspended, the agents of the law were at liberty to act as they pleased.

We now approach the most remarkable period in the history of those troublesome times. Maxentius, who, as we have seen, had usurped the sovereign power in Italy, on the plea of avenging the death of his father, prepared to make war upon Constantine. Whether from policy or caprice, though by nature a tyrant, he showed himself favorable to the Christians and ordered the persecutions against them to cease. This is the more remarkable still as he paid little or no regard to justice or decency in the case of the pagans subject to his rule, his whole career in their regard being one of blood, plunder and devastation. Before setting out upon his campagin, he commenced hostilities by casting down and destroying the statues of Con-

stantine which had been erected in the parts subject to his rule. His intention was to march into Gaul and return a conqueror. With this view he assembled an army of 170,000 foot and 18,000 horse. But before he was in a position to start, Constantine was at the walls of Rome with an army of 90,000, all told.

As we have seen by his remonstrance addressed to Maximian, Constantine was already favorably disposed towards the Christians. Neither he nor his father had ever persecuted them for their religious profession. If isolated instances occurred within his jurisdiction it is to be attributed to the malevolence of the governors acting on their own responsibility. Before entering upon his expedition, he addressed his prayers to the one Sovereign Being, the Lord and Master of all things, whom his father recognized as the only true God. His prayer was heard and as a testimony of the divine favor one day while marching at the head of his troops there appeared to him and to his army a luminous cross with this inscription, "In hoc signo vinces"—"In this sign thou shalt conquer." The same night our divine Lord appeared to him in a dream with a like cross, and commanded him to make a similar one and bear it as a standard at the head of his troops. He did so, and the new, standard was named the Labarum. Several smaller ones were also formed, and took the place of the idols, which were borne by the legions. The exact locality of this miraculous occurrence is unknown, some placing it in Italy, some in Gaul, and others again on the banks of the Rhine.

While Constantine was thus marching upon Rome, under the auspices of the signs of salvation, the Christians of the East were undergoing a severe persecution at the hands of his colleagues, Alexander and Maximin. The partial and politic cessation which the latter, as we have seen, put to the sufferings of the Christians, at the instance of Constan-

tine, was only ephemeral in its character. It lasted merely as long as there was fear to enforce it, and hence, Constantine being now engaged with a powerful rival, Maximin found himself at liberty to recur to his former policy and to indulge his accustomed inclination by persecuting the faithful. His tyranny in this instance was directed against the Christians of Armenia. On their refusal to renounce their religion, he declared a war of extermination against them, determining to sweep them from the land, or to make them comply with his will. But in this he miscalculated; for the hand of the Lord was against him, and, instead of victory, defeat was his portion; while at home the empire was desolated by famine and pestilence. Meantime, Constantine was moving rapidly towards Rome. At Suze, a town on the Italian side of the Alps, he met with the first opposition. That place refused to open its gates to him, but was speedily taken by assault. At Turin, he encountered a considerable army which he readily overcame. Milan, Brescia and Verona, in turn, fell into his hands. The last mentioned place offered the strongest opposition; but so little did he doubt the result, that, before it had surrendered, he intrusted its capture to one of his generals and hastened, himself, to the subjugation of Aquileia and Modena. In fine, all northern Italy, to the walls of Rome, was shortly in his possession. Maxentius, who was still in the capital, awaited the advance of his enemy. The repeated losses his troops had sustained, added to the universal discouragement, made him aware that, if a victory was to be gained, it should be by artifice or general-ship, and not by force. He accordingly attempted to accomplish by cunning what he could not by arms. To this end, in addition to an attempt at undermining, by bribery, the loyalty of the troops, he constructed a bridge spanning the Tiber, so that at his pleasure it might be made to give way

at the opportune moment. He had intended to remain in the city, and, when his adversary was crossing, to loosen the fastenings of the bridge, and thus to precipitate all into the Tiber. In this he was only preparing an instrument of ruin for himself, for being forced, by the murmurs and reproaches of the citizens, to advance against his powerful rival, and being defeated, in his flight the very ruin which he had intended for Constantine happened to himself. The bridge parted beneath his troops; he was precipitated into the Tiber with the flower of his army; and thus perished ingloriously on the 29th of October, 312.

CHAPTER XX

CONSTANTINE'S ACCESSION DOES NOT BRING UNIVERSAL PEACE TO THE CHURCH—EDICTS FAVORABLE TO THE CHRISTIANS ISSUED BY CONSTANTINE AND LICINIUS—MAXIMIN'S FUTILE ATTEMPT TO DISPLACE HIS COLLEAGUES AND TO OBTAIN SOLE CONTROL—HIS DEFEAT—DIOCLETIAN DIES WRETCHED—MARTYRS UNDER LICINIUS.

The triumph of Constantine, though a subject of great joy to the faithful, by no means brought peace to the universal Church. Paganism had not yet received its death blow. In the East, where Maximin ruled, the sword of persecution was still unsheathed and Christian blood continued to flow as freely as ever. It was different in the West, for recognizing in the triumph over Maxentius the aid of the true God, Constantine, on taking possession of the city, promulgated an edict in concert with Licinius in favor of the Christians. He was not yet a Christian, nor did he become one for five and twenty years later, till finding himself at the point of death he was formally received into the Church, in the suburbs of Nicomedia, A. D. 337.*

The new edict of toleration in behalf of the Christians was forwarded to Maximin, together with an account of the motives that prompted it. These were the favors accorded to the conqueror by the God of the Christians. The document arrived at an opportune moment, when the tyrant was preparing for a great slaughter of the faithful. Fearing to place himself in opposition to his colleague, he not only abstained from his premeditated

* Although the date of Constantine's conversion is disputed, still the great bulk of writers fix it at the time of his death, A. D. 337. For a full treatment of the case, see Natalis Alexander, vol. vii., p. 615.

butchery, but even caused an edict favorable to the Christians to be published. That the document was prompted by political and personal motives, and was not the result of a settled conviction of the justice of the cause, subsequent events fully establish. In it the true character of the tyrant duly appears, for while up to that date, as we have seen, he had been unceasing in the persecution of the faithful, he had now the audacity to declare that this had not been by his orders. The only length he went in the recent edict, was to cause a cessation of the persecution, without, however, permitting the Christians to practice their religion in public. Neither was there any clause in the document ordering the restoration of the confiscated property or permitting the churches to be re-opened.

After spending a few months in Rome, Constantine repaired to Milan where he was shortly after joined by Licinius who had gone there for the pupose of espousing his daughter. It was on that occasion, while occupied about matrimonial and state affairs, that both princes promulgated a second decree more comprehensive and important than the first. This was the first really liberal document that emanated from any of the Roman emperors. It secured liberty of conscience to all to worship as they pleased, and read thus: "I, Constantine Augustus, and I, Licinius Augustus, being at Milan and treating of all that regarded the public safety and utility, have thought it one of our first duties to regulate all that concerned the worship of the divinity and to give the Christians and all others the liberty to follow whatever religion each may choose, in order thus to draw down upon ourselves and our subjects the favor of heaven. We have, then, resolved by salutary counsel not to deny to any one the liberty of embracing the Christian religion or any other religion that may be deemed most convenient, in order that the supreme

divinity, whose religion we freely follow, may graciously favor us in all our difficulties with his divine graces. Whereupon you will understand that, notwithstanding all the documents addressed to you regarding the Christians, it has pleased us to order plainly that every one of those who wish to observe the Christian religion may do so without being disturbed or molested in any way, in order that you may know that we have given the Christians the free and absolute right of practicing their religion, at the same time that all others shall have the same liberty, and this in order to maintain the tranquillity of our empire. We have, furthermore, ordained, in regard to the Christians, that if the places they were accustomed to assemble in before, and in reference to which you have received certain orders from us, have been purchased by any one, whether by the fiscal or whosoever else it may be—that they be restored to the Christians without payment and with as little delay as possible. Let those who have received them in gift, restore them in like manner. And if any one have any claim, let him address himself to the governor of the province in order that his rights may be attended to by us. All these places shall, therefore, be immediately delivered up to the Christians by your order; and because it is notorious that besides the places where they assembled they had still other goods belonging to their communities, that is to say to the churches and not to individuals, you shall have restored to said communities all that they were deprived of on the conditions above expressed, without any difficulty or contestation, further than that those who restore them without a reimbursement may expect an indemnity from us. In all this you shall employ efficaciously your ministry in behalf of the Christians, in order to execute our orders as quickly as possible, and to procure the public tranquillity. Thus the divine favor, which we have already experienced in such

important events, shall ever continue to obtain for us great success and the welfare of the people. And in order that this ordinance may come to the knowledge of all, you shall have it posted every-where with your seal, so that it may not be unknown to any."

While the two emperors were thus engaged in legislating for the general good of the empire, and the happiness of their Christian subjects, Maximin was occupied in gathering around him an army, by which he treacherously contemplated surprising his colleague, and assuming supreme control in the empire. Meanwhile, he showed very plainly, the dispositions with which he had ever been animated towards the Christians; for, in the face of his recent favorable edict, he now recommenced persecuting the faithful, on account of their religion. His first victims were SS. Julien and wife, St. Sylvan, bishop of Emesa, in Phœnicia, St. Luke, and others. Though in the depth of winter, a period entirely unsuited for the transport of troops in those parts, Maximin, with the object stated already, set out from Nicomedia and hastened, by forced marches, through Bithynia, in the direction of Byzantium. Information of his proceedings having reached Milan, Licinius proceeded against him with an army considerably inferior in numbers, but vastly superior in the aid vouchsafed by the Almighty. They met at Adrianople, on the 30th of April. The night preceding the engagement, Licinius had a vision, in which victory was promised him. The result answered the prediction in an eminent degree; for Maximin, though having under his command 40,000 troops more than his adversary, was necessitated to precipitately recross the Dardanelles, and disguised as a slave, made his way back to Nicomedia. But his misfortunes did not end on reaching his capital, for he was pursued by his conqueror, who, on arriving there, returned solemn thanks to the Most High for the successes

that had attended his arms. Meantime, Licinius, also published the edict, framed at Milan, in favor of the religion. The Christians, were in consequence, again at liberty to rebuild their churches, and to profess in peace, their holy faith. He next pursued the fugitive emperor, who, finding himself crushed with misfortunes, revenged himself on his pagan priests by putting them to death in great numbers. Then recognizing the justice of the Christian cause, he revoked his former orders, published a decree in favor of the faithful, permitting them to rebuild their churches, and ordering them to be put in possession of their confiscated property. The act was not a sincere acknowledgment of the Christians' cause. It was merely a political effort to save himself from ruin; as such, it did not earn for him the favor and protection of heaven. And accordingly, abandoned by God and man, he attempted to put an end to his own life by taking poison, but not in such quantity as to immediately cause his death. Divine providence reserved him as a spectacle and an evidence of how, even in this life, the wicked are oftentimes punished for their transgressions. For four days the wretched man remained in the most excruciating agony. The poison which burned in his interior and caused him such suffering, dried up his whole system, and affected his body so as to leave it hardly recognizable. In his paroxysms of rage, he rolled madly on the ground, cried piteously for aid, beat his head violently against the wall, and ended by tearing out his eyes. Greater torments still awaited him; for now deprived of sight, it was his fate to behold, in spirit, that God armed with vengeance whom he had so much outraged. Terrified beyond measure at this preternatural spectacle, he acknowledged his guilt, confessed himself culpable, and begged in tears the Lord God to have mercy upon him. Thus, amid pains, terror, and affright, this enemy of the Christian name and cause, breathed out his last.

Upon the death of Maximin the entire empire fell into the hands of Constantine and Licinius. The former governed in the West, and the latter in the East. By public edicts the late emperor was declared a common enemy and a tyrant. His statues and monuments were every-where thrown to the ground or effaced; his effigies obliterated; his property and palaces confiscated; and every thing done to erase his memory from the public mind and records. As an act of retributive justice on the part of heaven, several of his relatives and of his agents, who had abused their power in persecuting the Christians, were by order of Licinius, immediately put to death, after being made to endure the most frightful tortures.

Not long after this, died, also, Diocletian. In his instance, too, is readily recognized the divine displeasure. Being amongst the deadliest of the persecutors of the Church of God, his end was hardly less tragic than his life was cruel. He died of melancholy, despair and starvation. For some time previous he was made to drink the bitterest cup of affliction, having the mortification of losing his wife and daughter who were both executed by order of Licinius. But this was only one (though indeed a great affliction) of the miseries with which the Lord God visited him at the close of his days. Hardly less painful was the indignity that was every-where offered to him in the destruction by the order of Constantine, of the images of Hercules with which he was associated. Thus Diocletian had the mortification of seeing himself every-where dishonored before the people. Another cause of grief to him was the open espousal on the part of Constantine and Licinius of the Christian cause, which he had done so much to destroy and against whose professors he was embittered with such a deadly hate. To crown his chagrin he was invited to Milan to assist at the marriage ceremony of Constantine's

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daughter, at the very time that an edict favorable to the Christians was to be promulgated. This was more than his proud spirit could endure and he accordingly excused himself from attending, on the ground of old age and the fatigue of the journey. His real motives were not unknown to the emperors. To deliver himself from their displeasure, which such a breach of courtesy naturally excited, he, according to the testimony of some, deprived himself of life by swallowing poison. Lactantius, on the other hand, assures us that his death was caused by melancholy and a refusal to take the nourishment requisite for the sustenance of human life. However that may be, it is certain that his last moments were a counterpart of those of Maximin. He rolled himself on the ground, gave expression to the bitterest lamentations and expired a victim of sorrow, melancholy and poison. Thus does God avenge himself on those who persecute his holy religion.

As has been remarked, upon the death of Maximin the empire was divided between Constantine and Licinius. The former, though not yet a Christian, warmly espoused the Christian cause, honored the ministers of religion, granted considerable immunities to particular churches, recalled the clergy who had been banished for their faith in the preceding reign, and, in a word did all in his power to undo what the tyrant Maxentius had done against the faithful of Christ. This happy state of affairs was even partially shared in by Licinius, but the demon of discord was not long in causing trouble between the two rulers to the great detriment of the Christian faith. For some cause not satisfactorily explained, an enmity broke out between them and both appealed to arms. Two battles were the result, one fought in Pannonia, and the other in Thrace, in both of which Licinius was defeated and compelled to sue for peace. His true character regarding the Christians

now began to appear. In the past he had favored them more from political than conscientious motives, and especially on account of respect and regard for his father-in-law. But this motive no longer existing, and not fearing any rival, he began to manifest the true sentiments by which he was animated. His entire sympathies were indeed in favor of paganism and opposed to Christianity. He did not however lift the mask at once. His policy was a mixture of cunning and hypocrisy. Under the plea of providing for liberty of conscience, he went no further at first than interdicting the clergy from visiting the pagans. The object was to prevent the spread of the faith. He next under the hypocritical pretext of providing the better for the good of religion, prohibited the bishops from leaving their sees, an order aimed against the holding of councils. Emboldened by the success he met with, he immediately lifted the veil by driving from his palace his Christian domestics, many of whom he banished into exile after having confiscated their goods. This was followed by an order prohibiting the clergy from instructing any but males. an ordinance which was supplemented by another prohibiting Christian assemblies within the precincts of the towns, on the ground of the danger of vitiating the air. This singular interest that the emperor thus apparently manifested for the moral and physical well-being of his people misled none, for his real motives —the true cause of his proceedings, was plain to all.

So far the emperor's persecution of the Church was a moral one. But this proving insufficient for his purpose, he now unsheathed the sword and used it with dreadful effect against the faithful and the clergy, but more especially against the chief pastors as the representatives of divine truth. In the chief cities of Pontus, the persecution raged with unparalleled violence: the churches were all demol-

ished, the flocks dispersed, the clergy butchered, their bodies outraged and committed to the sea to become the food of sharks and alligators.

It was during this persecution, in the year 316, that Saint Blaise, bishop of Sebaste in Armenia, underwent a most cruel death. Scourged at first, his sides were torn with iron hooks, after which he was cast into a frightful dungeon. From this he was afterwards drawn only to be cast into a lake with the object of drowning him, but being miraculously delivered, he finally consummated his course by being beheaded. Seven devout females, who were taken in the act of gathering some of the martyr's blood, paid the penalty of their pious solicitude by being decapitated.

Two years later took place the martyrdom of Theodora at Philippopolis in Thrace. This was one of those extraordinary instances in which the goodness of God is manifested towards the greatest of sinners. Another Magdalen had acknowledged her transgressions and was pardoned by the Lord. The occasion of this poor sinner's conversion and triumph was this: At the customary festival in honor of Apollo, all the inhabitants of Philppopolis were ordered to present themselves at the temple and to offer the usual sacrifices. Theodora, conscious of the manifold transgressions of which she was guilty, and touched by divine grace, shrank from adding apostasy to the number. When conducted before the prefect, she freely acknowledged the irregularity of her life, but boldly declared she would not consummate her guilt by abandoning the faith. Seven hundred and fifty of the faithful followed her courageous example and refused to sacrifice. Against these the tyrant's rage was also directed, but especially against Theodora who was the chief object of his vengeance. For twenty days she was confined in a close

prison, but this was insufficient to weaken her resolve. When again taken before the prefect's tribunal, bursting into tears she publicly demanded pardon for her former scandalous life and begged the Son of God to grant her the grace of enduring the torments prepared for her. She was then brutally scourged by order of the judge, after which she was placed on the rack, and her sides unmercifully torn by iron hooks and cords. During the operation she ceased not from thanking God for making her worthy to suffer for his name. Furious at being thus thwarted in his designs, the prefect commanded the executioner to pour salt and vinegar into her wounds, to all which she merely answered: "I fear so little your torments that I beg you to increase them in order that I may obtain mercy and acquire a glorious crown." As a further means of torture, the prefect had her teeth pulled out in succession, which when even this failed in its object, she was condemned to death and decapitated outside the city on the 29th September, 318.

On the following February, was executed for a like reason, at Heraclea in Thrace, St. Theodorus the commander-in-chief of Licinius' army. But the most remarkable victims of this period, were the forty martyrs of Sebaste, who were frozen to death by order of the governor Agricolaus. They were all military men in the flower of their youth, and of acknowledged bravery. Their valor and services had raised them to the positions of officers in their respective corps. When the orders of the emperor were read for the troops, commanding all to embrace the pagan form of worship, those forty generous Christians advanced in turn from the ranks and solemnly confessed the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was a solemn moment and a noble and heroic act. When called upon to give their names they merely answered, "We are all Christians." The

president made use of every means in his power to shake their constancy. At first he tried flattery and persuasive measures, representing to them how unworthy it was for persons of their condition to die the death of criminals, and how unreasonable, too, to lose the advantages of so many years of military service. To this he added promises of money and higher dignities than those they actually enjoyed. Seeing, in fine, that his words were unattended to, and barren of every result, he adopted a different course placing before their imaginations the most frightful tortures that the mind could suggest or man inflict, all of which had no other effect than to render the faithful soldiers of Christ more resolute in their determination. To all his arguments they answered in the following spirited manner: "What do you mean by these offers, O enemy of God? Do you expect by these presents to make us abandon the worship of the living God for that of demons? For that purpose you should convince us that what you offer is better than what you want us to lose. We don't desire your gifts then, which could only injure us. We reject your offers which could merely plunge us in an abyss of ignominy. Give us eternal riches and a glory which shall never cease. You promise us the favors of the emperor, and you would have us lose those of God. You wish us to enjoy the things of the world, and are you unconscious of the fact that we despise the world? Understand that all that falls under the senses, all that the eye beholds of beauty in creatures, all that the imagination conceives of what is rare and surprising, is only a shadow of what hope makes us look for in the life to come. Behold the heavens, nothing is worthier of your attention, nothing is grander. And the earth, how vast and what wonders does it not contain! And yet the possession of all that, does not equal the felicity which God has prepared for the just. For the heavens and the earth

shall pass away, but that felicity shall not. It is then, only for it that we can have any real ambition; it is the only glory after which we aspire. We wish to be happy, and we fear to be miserable. The fire of hell terrifies us. . . . Do you wish us to tell you how we regard your torments? They are merely little slaps administered by an infant's hand. You can, indeed, do a little damage to our bodies, and the longer it holds out the better for us, for the more brilliant will be our crown. But if it succumbs quickly under your blows, so much the better for us also, for we will be the sooner delivered out of your hands. And now is it not a strange thing to see you endeavoring to extend your authority even to our souls, and entering into a rage because we choose to obey God's commands rather than yours. That preference astonishes you, and you are offended as if an injury were done to your authority, We are criminals in your eyes because we have a sense of religion, while the fidelity which we preserve towards God, merits your heaviest chastisement. We don't love life so much, nor do we fear death so much, as to comply with your will. And now be it known to you, that we are ready to suffer all the torments you may subject us to—wheels, racks or fire, for the love of God, whom we adore." The only question with the governor, now, was what kind of death would be the severest, and most likely to shake the constancy of those generous soldiers of Christ. Something unusual and extraordinary had to be thought of. They had contemned the ordinary mode of torture. The governor, accordingly, bethought himself of a suffering never before inflicted on any of the faithful, and which, from its character and continuance, was best calculated to test the resolve of the martyrs. It being then mid-winter, and the time exceedingly cold, the tyrant ordered that, on a certain night when the wind blew the sharpest, the forty confessors

should be exposed naked, on a frozen lake, where they should remain till death put an end to their torments, in case they refused to comply with the impious orders. It would be difficult to convey a correct idea of the sufferings entailed by such a death. Almost any other species of torture would be preferable to it. Men who would brave the axe, the rack or the stake, would shrink before the frozen lake. In such a case the sufferers may be said to die by inches, for as their bodies became benumbed, the blood retired from the extremities, and left the parts abandoned dead, a process which continued until the vital spark was extinguished in the seat of life by the slow but steady advance of the piercing cold. In such a case the torture at first commences by the blood freezing in the veins. Then a deadly pallor spreads over the entire form, the teeth chatter, the veins and body contract, and an inexpressible pain shoots even into the marrow of the bones causing frightful convulsions. But the anticipation of this terrible death was unable to alter the resolve of the generous confessors. Accordingly they accepted the situation, and advanced courageously to the place of execution. The north-wind, it is said, was then so piercing as to destroy the beasts that were exposed to it. Courageously casting their eyes on that frightful bed of torture, where they were to pass the night, they cheerfully removed their clothes, remarking that in doing so they were only putting off the old man. Then turning their eyes towards heaven, they exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord God, that we divest ourselves of sin in divesting ourselves of our robes. . . . We all strip for the love of God who has been stripped for the love of us. If the Master has suffered pain, it is not much for the slave to suffer. . . . Deign, O Lord, to receive our sacrifice, receive us as so many living victims who immolate ourselves to you with our own hands."

In these admirable sentiments did they enter upon the dreadful contest; a night of unparalleled sufferings was before them. But they resignedly accepted their destiny; their continuous prayer being: "Forty we have entered upon the course, may it please thee, O Lord, that forty we shall be crowned—that there shall not be one who will not receive the prize," etc.

To further tempt their constancy a warm bath had been prepared hard by under the care of the guard as to be a continual invitation to them to yield and to save themselves from death. But the device was of little worth. Slowly the hours of that frightful night passed, each moment causing the most terrible tortures to the generous sufferers—each moment deadening more and more their members. In the midst of that frightful torture a sight novel and unaccountable presented itself to the soldier on guard. A number of heavenly spirits were seen by him descending from heaven bearing palms and crowns for all the company but one. Why an exception should be made in the number he could not understand, but presently the reason became clear. For one of the sufferers at that very instant yeilding to the tortures, rushed from the lake and cast himself into the bath. But, unhappy man, the act even temporarily was his ruin, for the shock was more than he could bear and he immediately expired. Learning from this the true nature of the contest, the guard immediately divested himself of his garments, joined the sufferers and proclaimed himself a Christian. When morning dawned they were still alive, but were then cast into a blazing fire and consumed.

The cruelty thus exercised by Licinius and his subordinates was a constant subject of annoyance and displeasure to Constantine. He remonstrated against it and always obtained promises of amendment, but promises only

to be broken within a short time. And this continued down to the date of his defeat at Adrianople on the 3rd of July, A. D. 323. From that period the Roman Empire was again united under one emperor and all persecutions ceased through its entire extent.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONSTANTINE UNITES THE WHOLE EMPIRE IN HIS OWN PERSON—THE CHRISTIANS BANISHED BY LICINIUS PERMITTED TO RETURN—SAPOR KING OF PERSIA PERSECUTES THE FAITHFUL—CONSTANTINE REMONSTRATES—JULIAN SUCCEEDS TO THE THRONE—HE RESOLVES TO RE-ESTABLISH PAGANISM AND TO ABOLISH CHRISTIANITY—HIS TACTICS.

On uniting in his own person the eastern and western provinces of the empire, Constantine's first care was to provide for the liberty and interest of the faithful whom Licinius had driven from their homes and imprisoned or exiled for the faith. To this end he issued an ordinance in which, after gratefully acknowledging the protection vouchsafed him by heaven in his late contest with Licinius, he commanded a cessation of hostilities against the true believers and ordered them to be put in possession of their homes and emoluments. A great change was thus suddenly effected in the condition of the faithful. From being exiles and prisoners, objects of contempt and derision to their fellow men, they now beheld themselves restored to an equality of rights with their pagan brethren and placed in the highest positions of trust and emolument in the community.

The defeat of Licinius at Adrianople was by far the most important event of that period in its bearings on the destinies of the Christian Church. Had that evil-minded monarch succeeded, the condition of the faithful would have been deplorable in the extreme. His intention was to destroy Christianity entirely. Immediately before engaging in battle, he sought to propitiate in his favor by magic rites his pagan

divinities. "The gods," said he to his attendants, "that we adore, are the same that our enemy has abandoned. It is, therefore, not against us, but against them that war is being made. We shall then presently see who is mistaken, for the victory will be the test. If we are conquered, it is clear we are in error and nothing is more proper than to abandon the service of those who have been unable to assist us and to engage in the worship of him whom we now contemn and despise. If, on the other hand, our gods are victorious, if they grant us the victory, as they undoubtedly will, we must be resolved to wage an exterminating war against these impious wretches." From this it is clear how bitter would have been the condition of the Christians had Constantine's efforts not been crowned with success. But the time had arrived when in the disposition of divine providence, the sword was to be sheathed. This, however, by no means put an end to the sufferings of the Church. The powers of hell were still as active as ever, but in a different manner. Seeing the impossibility of employing any longer physical violence, the evil one had now recourse to another device. That was the introduction of error and an attempt at corrupting that faith by which all are to attain to life everlasting. The agent employed for this iniquitous purpose was Arius, an African priest, born in Lybia. While Licinius was marshaling his forces against Constantine, this unhappy individual was actively engaged in propagating his false doctrines. The success he met with from the beginning, and which was very considerable, is more to be attributed to the circumstances of the times than to his own natural ability, though the latter was far from being inconsiderable. The favor shown the Church by Constantine after his victory over Maxentius in 312, brought over to the religion, partly from motives of policy and self-interest, a large body of converts who at best were only partially imbued with

the true principles and doctrines of the Church. To turn these aside from the paths of truth and cause them to embrace error required only an able and artful advocate. Arius was such a person; he understood the situation and profited by it. What did persons, recently brought over from paganism and only partly instructed in the doctrines of the Church, understand about such questions as the eternity of the word and the free will of Christ? Enough that these had been proposed to them by one in whose learning and integrity they trusted. Court favor, too, aided the heresiarch considerably in his unholy design. On retiring into Palestine after his condemnation in Egypt, he took up his abode with Eusebius, bishop of Nicodemia. By him he was introduced to Constantia, the emperor's daughter, and received with much kindness. Thus strengthened and leaning on the arm of the civil authority, Arius was enabled to spread with greater freedom his noxious doctrines, and then was witnessed the lamentable scene of bishop against bishop, and flock against flock. To such an extent were the errors being propagated that it was found necessary to summon a general council, which met at Nice, in Bithynia, A. D. 325. The bishops of Europe, Asia and Africa, to the number of 318, assembled there, many of whom bore on their persons the marks of the sufferings they had endured for the faith. Of this number all except two, who were afterwards deposed and banished for their obstinacy, signed the decree condemnatory of Arius. The vindication of the true faith in this signal manner did not, however, put an end to Arius' career of evil, for, though banished into Illyria, he yet continued to propagate his errors and caused by his teachings more damage to the Church than any other of his time. But a full account of his doings does not enter in to the object of this work.

It has been stated above that upon the triumph of Con-

stantine over Licinius, the sword of persecution was sheathed. This is to be understood only of the Roman empire. Two years before Licinius' defeat, Sapor was named king of Persia. He was yet in his mother's womb, and happy for the faithful if he had never been born, for from the moment of his attaining his majority and assuming the chief command, he proved himself the most implacable enemy of the Christian name and cause. He was urged on by the Jews and the Magi who were greatly incensed at the progress the religion was making in the country. Moreover, he entertained against the Romans a strong national antipathy on account of successes gained over his country in former years. Cruel by nature, and of a revengeful disposition, Sapor readily listened to the evil suggestions of his counsellors, and attempted to destroy an organization which he regarded as in sympathy with his enemies. At first he proceeded with caution and contented himself with imposing exorbitant taxes on the faithful with the view of reducing them to poverty, that thus they might the more readily be induced to abandon the religion. This not succeeding according to his wishes, he commanded the bishops and priests to be slain —an order which was quickly put into effect by the Magi and the Jews, who in their hatred of Christianity demolished the churches and scattered the flock. Amongst the first to lay down his life for the faith was Simeon, archbishop of Seleucia and Ctesiphon. The charges laid to his account were his being a friend of the Romans and unwilling to worship the sun. Three hundred others were led out with him to execution, one hundred of whom were bishops, priests, and inferior clergy.* He exhorted them most earnestly to constancy, pointing out to them how death was their reward, and that the most glorious action capable of being performed by man was to die for God. It was a

*See Sozomen, Ecclesiastical Hist., p. 63.

touching and edifying scene to witness the venerable bishop thus leading his priests and people on to victory, and much more edifying to behold their united acquiescence to his words. When all his companions had been slain, Simeon himself was executed. He saw the victory of his people, and what more did he ambition? Life under such circumstances would be death.

The blood of these three hundred martyrs was not enough to appease the cruel Sapor. It only excited and enraged him the more. Like the wild beast that becomes more savage and furious on tasting the blood of its victims, that enemy of the faith thirsted for a still larger measure of human blood. Accordingly on the following day he issued an order condemning to death all who professed themselves Christians. Vast numbers in consequence were put to the sword. Of those belonging to the palace who were slain, was an attendant name Azadas a particular favorite of the king. It was providential, for on learning of his death, Sapor was so overwhelmed with grief that he immediately countermanded the indiscriminate slaughter and commanded that thenceforth none but the leaders of religion should be slain. This ordinance, however, was not strictly adhered to in every instance. The queen consort who was a proselyte to Judaism, being attacked with a painful distemper, was easily persuaded that the cause of it was Tarbula, a virgin sister of the martyred Simeon, who to revenge herself for her brother's death had enchanted her majesty. The calumny was readily believed by the sufferer and instructions were given for the arrest and punishment of the holy virgin. She suffered in company with her sister and a faithful attendant who had also devoted themselves to a religious life. They were sawn asunder and the parts fixed on posts which the suffering queen was advised to pass under that the enchantment might be broken.

In conformity with the latter instructions of Sapor that none but the clergy should be punished with death, the officers of the law traversed the country in every direction in search of their victims. They succeeded chiefly in the country of Adiabenians where there was a large number of Christians. They did not, indeed, in every instance deprive them of life, but contented themselves with scourging them and appropriating their property. Accpsimus, the bishop of the place, being the chief of the little community was deemed worthy of a greater measure of punishment: Being scourged for refusing to worship the sun he was cast into prison where he was joined immediately after by one of his priests, who obtained that permission from the authorities. Having been detained for a considerable time in confinement he was subsequently led out to execution in company with two of his faithful clergy, James and Authalas. Immediately after, from two to three hundred religious (priests, deacons, monks, and holy virgins) were executed for a like cause. Nor was the monarch's rage appeased hereby. The work of slaughter still went on and to such an extent that no accurate account could be kept of the number of the sufferers. "It would be difficult," says Sozomen, "to relate in detail every circumstance respecting them, such as their names, their country, the mode of their martyrdom, and the species of torture to which they were subjected. I shall briefly state, that the number of men and women whose names have been ascertained and who were martyred at this period, has been computed to be upward of sixteen thousand; while the multitude of martyrs whose names are unknown was so great that the Persians, and Syrians and the inhabitants of Edessa have failed in all their efforts to compute the number."

An account of the horrible sufferings to which the Christians were being subjected by the pagan Persian authori-

ties having reached Constantine, he was touched with compassion, and addressed a communication to Sapor, in behalf of the sufferers. In it he assured the Persian king that there was nothing in the religion of a reprehensible character, that the faithful make supplications to God by prayer alone, and that their whole system treated only of virtue and holiness of life. The letter is as follows: "It is by the aid of God, that setting out from the extremity of the ocean, I have delivered all the habitable globe of the tyrants that oppressed it. It is this God I adore, and my army, which is consecrated to him and carries his standard, does not cease to gain victories, for which I return him thanks. This supreme being, who inhabits the high heavens, does not require sacrifice of flesh and blood, but a pure and virtuous heart. He loves faith, justice and mildness, and punishes infidelity and pride. Do not imagine that I am deceived in believing in this God, who is the creator of all things. The greater number of those who have held this empire, seduced by senseless errors, denied this God. But all have been punished in such a manner, that from that moment every one wishes the same calamities to happen to those who would follow their example. Of that number was he whom the anger of God, like thunder, hurled out of our dominions into yours, where he is become a mark of ignominy for his own. In our own days I have seen the last moments of those who tormented the people of God. Hence I cease not in blessing his divine providence, for having brought peace and happiness to men, in leading them to a knowledge of his divine law. I am persuaded that herein consists the happiness and security of the universe. Judge, then, my joy on learning that the principal parts of Persia had the happiness of possessing several of these men, that is to say, Christians; for it is of these I speak. It is an honor for you, and also for me, and your glory is

also theirs. I recommend them, then, to your protection: in treating them kindly, you will do yourself honor and me a great kindness."

We are not informed how this letter was received, but we may infer that it produced favorable results; for, from that date till 360, history is silent about any further persecutions. Of those that suffered at the time, we shall speak farther on. From the death of Constantine in 337, till the accession of Julian, surnamed the Apostate, in 361, the Church was sorely afflicted by the heretical factions that arose within her fold, and contended for power. The Arian party having obtained the aid of the secular authority, were guilty of the greatest excesses, and in a persecution which became general, drove the Catholic prelates every-where from their sees. But a detailed account of their doings, is hardly within the scope of this work, and the reader is accordingly referred to the history of that period, for a description thereof.

On the death of Constantius, in 361, the empire fell to Julian, the nearest of kin. This was one of the greatest enemies the Church had ever to contend against. At the time the vacancy occurred he was in Egypt, where his troops had already proclaimed him emperor, after a successful engagement against some barbarous tribes who inhabited the banks of the Nile. It was then that he formally renounced the Christian faith, which he did with the utmost profanity, by offering sacrifice to the pagan gods and having himself baptized with blood, in order to remove, if possible, the Christian character from his soul. For a long time Julian was a pagan at heart; but motives of policy prevented him from declaring his sentiments. From the moment he ascended the imperial throne, his only thought was how to destroy the Christian faith. He did not, indeed, have recourse to violence, for he had seen how

little this had effected in the past, and he was ambitious, moreover, of being regarded as a liberal and tolerant ruler. But if he did not persecute as several of his predecessors, it was not that he loved the Christians the more. After paying the last mark of respect to the late emperor, at Constantinople, he issued an edict, ordering the pagan temples to be re-opened, and the worship of the gods to be conducted as in former times. He himself set his subjects the example, by declaring himself high priest, and offering sacrifice. It was a deplorable sight, for the Christian world to behold one, who had been before an edifying Christian and a member of the clerical body, now offering sacrifice to the pagan divinities, and, as far as in him lay, promoting the reign of error. The man who did most to prejudice him against the Christians, and in favor of paganism, was Maximus, an Ephesian philosopher, whose acquaintance he made at Nicomedia, whither he was obliged to retire at the instance of Constantius. This man had taught him philosophy, and predicted that he would be one day emperor. From Nicomedia he repaired by permission of the emperor, to Athens, ostensibly with the view of perfecting himself in the philosophy of the schools, but in reality only to become more thoroughly acquainted with the art of divination. Being thus completely pagan in heart and sentiment, and imbued with the most absurd and fantastic ideas, we are not to be astonished at seeing him turning his palace from the moment of his accession to the throne, into a temple of the gods. Every known deity, of acknowledged repute, had his altar and sacrifice appointed for him there. Morning, noon and night, the emperor faithfully discharged his duties of high priest, by offering the customary oblations and sacrifices to these imaginary deities. At day-break he sacrificed to the rising sun, in honor of that god's return to earth, and at even-tide again, as a tribute to his departure.

Not content with worshipping the idols, he would have the multitude worship even the temples, the floors and the altars. Never before, nor since, was greater natural ability and extreme superstition united in any individual. To please his favorite divinities, and thus to obtain their favor and protection, he placed a restraint upon his sensual appetite, by fasting on appointed days from certain meats, which he fancied disagreeable to these gods. By fasts and vigils, too, he prepared himself for holding familiar intercourse with the heavenly powers. In short, he was a pagan in the most absolute sense; he entered into the idea with the zeal and energy of one, who was a chief apostle of the prince of darkness. To accomplish successfully the object in view, two things had to be mainly attended to: Christianity had to be discouraged, dishonored, and abased, while paganism on the other hand, was to be exalted and honored. Violence could not be thought of as an instrument under the circumstances, for apart entirely from the failure of such means in the past, it would be a question whether one half the population would tamely submit to be slaughtered without cause by a tyrant. Nothing, accordingly, was left unaccomplished to give prominence to the religion of the gods and goddesses. The arts, the sciences, and the literature of the time were brought into requisition, and employed with the most damaging and ruinous effect. The favor and example of the court, too, where every thing was pagan, had like results As an instance of how powerfully the influence of this nature must have operated in behalf of the errors of paganism, the reader may judge from the fact that when the inhabitants of Nisibis, a town composed entirely of Christians, implored the emperor's aid against an expected invasion of the Persians, he refused on the ground of their being unwilling to re-open the ancient pagan places of worship. In the same answer, he further solemnly assured

them he would never do them the favor of visiting their city, until they returned to the religion of their fathers. He likewise manifested his displeasure towards the Christian inhabitants of Constantius, in Palestine, by depriving them of their civic hereditary rights, and making them tributary to Gaza. It was at the same time and for the same cause, that of being Christians, that Julian erased from the catalogue of Roman cities the name of Cæsarea the wealthy capital of Cappadocia. He was particularly incensed against the inhabitants of this place on account of their eminent Christian virtues, and their destruction of the pagan places of worship. At the time of his accession to the throne, there was only one still remaining, the Temple of Fortune, and this, too, quickly shared the fate of the others. In a temporal sense, it had been better for the inhabitants to have left it alone; for its destruction drew upon them the heaviest chastisement. On learning of its demolition, Julian's anger knew no bounds. He could not have been more enraged, had a member of his own family been slain. To punish what he regarded an almost unpardonable offense, he confiscated the entire Church property of the city, and placed the receipts to the amount of about 300 lbs. of gold, in the public treasury. Not contented with this, he commanded all the clergy to be enrolled amongst the provincial troops, and imposed upon the faithful at large, taxes of a most oppressive and ruinous nature. In fine, he commanded the ruined temples to be rebuilt, declaring that unless this were speedily done, he would come in person and slay every Galilean, a soubriquet by which he contemptuously designated the Christians. How the faithful would have fared under the circumstances, it is not difficult to conjecture, but Julian died, and a frightful carnage was accordingly spared.

Strange as it may appear it was from the same intense

hatred against the Christian's faith and the desire of effecting its ruin, that Julian now issued an edict in favor of the exiled Christians permitting all who had been banished for the faith to return to their homes ordering them even to be put into possession of their confiscated properties. For thirty years prior to that date the spirit of heresy had wrought innumerable evils in the church. Arianism had spread among all ranks and infected society in every quarter. Party spirit ran exceedingly high. Invective and denunciation had taken the place of moderation and Christian benevolence. From being an Arian, Julian was aware of the feeling that existed against the members of the true Church. To array party against party in deadly conflict and thereby cause their destruction, or at least by their contentions and divisions to bring odium on the Christian name and cause, was what urged him to grant them their liberty. It was a cool, philosophical scheme, eminently worthy of its author. The manner in which it was prosecuted was even more deceptive and treacherous than the measure itself was bad. After proclaiming the doctrine of universal toleration and permitting the banished faithful to return to their homes, he invited to his palace and brought as closely as possible into contact the leaders of the various denominations, recommending at the same time natural forbearance and Christian toleration. In this the emperor was aware that he was only fanning the flames of religious divisions and increasing the cause of disputes already existing. But still his efforts were not as successful as he desired. Paganism was a thing of the past. The temples indeed were rebuilt, sacrifices offered, festivals established and observed, but the hearts of the people were not there. The presence and favor of Julian alone gave to the system a vitality which was more apparent than real. Those withdrawn, it was easy to see how the people would act.

What particularly discouraged and afflicted the emperor was the knowledge that the families of several of the paid ministers of paganism were members of the Christian religion. Being philosophical-minded and observant enough to understand that one of the great causes tending to the recommendation of the Christian religion and its propagation through the world, was the admirable discipline of its system and the virtuous lives of its teachers, Julian resolved upon copying the same and making the former a part of the paganism he taught. To this end he instituted various orders and degrees in the ministry, founded convents monasteries and hospitals for the relief of the poor and of strangers. The importance attached by him to the last mentioned as a means of advancing the interests of paganism the reader will understand from the following communication addressed by him to Arsacius the high priest of Galatia:—"To Arsacius, High Priest of Galatia—Paganism has not yet reached the degree of prosperity that might be desired owing to the conduct of its votaries. The worship of the gods, however, is conducted on the grandest and most magnificent scale, so far exceeding our very hopes and expectations that no one could have dared to look for so surprising a change as that which we have witnessed within a very short space of time. But are we to rest satisfied with what has been already effected? Ought we not rather consider that the progress of Christianity has been principally owing to the humanity evinced by Christians toward strangers, to the reverence they have manifested for the dead and to the delusive gravity which they have assumed in their conduct and deportment? It is requisite that all of us should be diligent in the discharge of our duty: I do not refer to you alone, as that would not suffice, but to all the priests of Galatia. You must either put them to shame or try the power of persua-

sion, or else deprive them of their sacredotal offices, if they do not with their wives and their children and their servants join in the service of the gods, or if they permit their wives or their sons to disregard the gods and to prefer impiety to piety. Exhort them not to frequent theatres, not to drink at taverns, and not to engage in any trade or practice any nefarious art. Honor those who yield to your remonstrances and expel those who disregard them. Establish hospitals in every city, so that neigboring and foreign countries may reap the benefit of our philanthropy according to their respective need. I have provided means to meet the necessary expenditure and have issued directions throughout the whole of Galatia, that you should be furnished annually with 30,000 bushels of corn and 60,000 measures of wine, of which the fifth part is to be devoted to the support of the poor who attend upon the priests, and the rest is to be distributed among strangers and our own poor. For while there are no persons in need among the Jews and while even the impious Galileans provide not only for those of their own party who are in want, but also for those who hold with us, it would indeed be disgraceful, if we were to allow our own people to suffer from poverty. Teach the pagans to co-operate in this work of benevolence, and let the first fruits of the town be offered to the God. Habituate them to the exercise of this liberality by showing them how such conduct is sanctioned by the practice of remote antiquity; for Homer represents Eumæus saying:

> 'It never was our guise,
> To slight the poor or ought humane despise;
> For Jove unfolds our hospitable door,
> 'Tis Jove that sends the stranger and the poor.'

Let us not permit others to excel us in piety; let us not dishonor ourselves, nor the service of the gods by our

negligence. If I hear that you act according to my directions, I shall rejoice exceedingly. Do not often visit the governors at their own houses, but write to them frequently. When they enter the city let no priest go to meet them: and let not the priest accompany them further than the vestibule when they repair to the temple of the gods. Neither let any soldiers march before them on such occasions; but let those follow them who will. As soon as they have entered within the gates of the temple they are but private individuals, for there it is your duty, as you well know, to preside according to the divine decree. Those who humbly conform to this law manifest that they possess the true religion, whereas those who contemn it, are proud and vainglorious. I am ready to render assistance to the inhabitants of Pessena, provided that they will propitiate the mother of the gods; but if they neglect this duty they will incur my utmost displeasure. It is not right for me to show compassion towards those with whom the immortal gods are at enmity. Convince them therefore that if they desire my assistance, they must offer up supplications to the mother of the gods."

The boastful, self-sufficient style in which the foregoing commences, claiming for paganism a success entirely unexpected, was far from expressing its real condition. It is true several, beguiled by the hope of preferment and the emperor's favor, abandoned the truth and embraced the idolatrous worship; but the great bulk of the faithful, sustained and defended by such men as Apollinaris, Basil, and Gregory, remained faithful to their religious profession and despised the emperor's displeasure. It was then that Julian, seeing himself thus thwarted in his darling desire, found it necessary to have recourse to oppression, by depriving the faithful of their hereditary rights as citizens of the empire. He also closed the schools against the young and forbade

them to be instructed in the polite literature of the day that thus they might be the less qualified to defend with ability the doctrines of their holy religion. Thrown upon their own resources, the Christians now were necessitated to have recourse to the genius and ability of the men of their own communion for an acquisition of that classic taste and culture which till then were the common inheritance of all. To remedy the difficulty, Appollinaris, a man of extraordinary erudition, wrote a series of works in prose and poetry that might well be compared with the best of the classic models of antiquity. Amongst others he wrote one entitled "The Truth" in which he proved against the emperor the divinity of the Christian religion. Julian in his reply contemptuously answered: "I have read, I have understood and I have condemned:" to which the Catholic prelate responded as tersely——"you have read, but you have not understood; for had you understood, you would not have condemned."

The law prohibiting the Christian youth from being taught in the schools the polite literature of the time, and dismissing the Christian teachers, was not long in producing its fruit. The great bulk of the latter cheerfully abandoned their positions and engaged in other employments, but some, yielding to the temptation, retained their posts at the expense of their conscience.

At this time Julian repaired to the East in order to engage in a war against Persia for not having acknowledged his supremacy as emperor. On the way while proceeding to Antioch he stopped at Ancyra, where he condemned to a most cruel death the renowned defender of the faith, Basil of that place. This remarkable man had been long one of the great pillars of the Church of Ancyra and the most formidable enemy of the pagan religion. He had applied himself during the preceding reign in strengthening the

people in the doctrines of divine truth and saving them from the infection of heresy. According to his Acts, he forewarned the faithful of the danger impending and predicted the attacks that would be made on their faith during the reign of the apostate. Upon Julian's accession to the throne, fearing for his people, Basil publicly prayed against the evil he dreaded. "Do not permit, O Lord," he cried, "that the abominable ceremonies of idolatry should prevail over the truth which you have taught. Overturn their altars and their ministers. Render their projects unavailing and may they never seduce the souls of those who believe in you."

This bold and zealous language drew upon him the anger of the pagans and caused them to hurry him before the pro-consul, where they accused him of creating a disturbance in the community and spreading confusion among the people. "We have found him teaching the people a dangerous doctrine," said they; "he preaches the destruction of the altars of the gods and in terms disrespectful to the emperor. The people listen to him and he has already converted many." The consul, having endeavored in vain to get him to renounce his religion and to sacrifice to the gods, remanded him, at last, to prison till he would learn the emperor's pleasure. Julian, being duly informed of all that transpired, sent two of his confidants, Elpidius and Pegasus, to try and gain over the saint. The interview was as brusque and frank on the one side as it was insidious and cautious on the other. "Your humble servant," said Pegasus to Basil, as he entered the prison door. "Detestable prevaricator, infamous deserter from the army of Christ," responded the latter, "what brings you here? Do you remember, traitor, those former years, that happy time when you drank from those pure, limpid sources of the divine word? And now you are filled only with muddy

water. Then you participated in the sacred mysteries of the table of the Lord; to-day you eat the bread of demons. In those happy days you were the doctor and master of truth; but now you are become the chief of the persecutors." This was more than the traitor could stand, he quitted the saint in a rage and hastened to the pro-consul swearing to be revenged for the insult he had received. Basil was again summoned before that official, and condemned to be loaded with chains till the emperor's pleasure would be known. At this juncture Julian arrived at Ancyra. He was received with great demonstrations of loyalty and affection by the pagan inhabitants. The priests of Hecate went forth to meet him in solemn procession, bearing the statue of their goddess on a litter. On the following day, Basil being summoned into the emperor's presence, Julian addressed him thus: "Who are you and what is your name?" "I will tell you," answered Basil: "In the first place I am called a Christian: that is a great name and is glorious to possess, for the name of Jesus Christ is an eternal name which shall never perish, which the lapse of ages shall never obliterate, a name which surpasses every other in grandeur and glory. Besides the name of Christian," continued he, "I am called Basil and it is under that I am known in the world. If I preserve unsullied the first, I shall receive from Jesus Christ a blessed immortality as a recompense." "Your are in error, Basil," replied Julian; "You forget that I know something about your mysteries. I assure you that he in whom you place your hope is not what you think. He died, and died verily in the time that Pilate was governor of Judea." "I am not in error," answered Basil, "but you are, emperor—you who renounced Jesus Christ at the very moment that he gave you the empire. But I forewarn you now, that he will take it from you in a short time, with your life, and you

will then understand, but too late, that it was he whom you abandoned." "You are a liar and a false prophet," retorted Julian, "it will never happen so." "I tell you it will," answered Basil: "understand that as you have been unmindful of the favors you have received from him, he will be unmindful of his goodness when there is question of punishing you. You have not had any respect for his altars, you have overturned them: he in turn will overturn your throne. You have delighted in violating his law, that law which you so often announced to the people.* You have trampled it under foot, your body shall remain unburied, and shall be also trampled under foot, after your soul shall be separated from it by the greatest sufferings."

Julian could hardly contain himself while the saint uttered this noble and fearless protest against his impieties, warning him of the end whither he was hastening. At last bursting forth into a rage he cried out: "I shall avenge the majesty of the empire so horribly outraged by you in my person. I desire then that seven slices of flesh be cut from your body daily." The execution of this terrible sentence was intrusted to Frumentis, one of the equeries of his royal household. After enduring the torture for several days, Basil expressed a desire of seeing the emperor. Was he going to submit and to offer incense to the idols? So thought Frumentis, and in his joy at being the bearer of so agreeable an intelligence, hastened immediately to his master's presence. Julian on his part was equally rejoiced and proceeded on the moment to the temple of Esculapius where he awaited his victim. On arriving there, Basil enquired if his majesty knew why he demanded an audience. "I thought," answered he, "that it was to signify your intention of joining us in our sacrifices." "Nothing

* Julian was a lector or reader in the church.

is farther from my thoughts," replied the saint; "those whom you call gods are nothing more than deaf and dumb idols"—saying which he flung into the emperor's face a slice of the flesh that had been cut that day from his body. "There," said he, "eat that since you like it so well. Do now the most you can, for I declare that death is my gain; it is for Jesus Christ that I suffer, who is my refuge, my support and my life."

It would be impossible to describe in adequate terms the disappointment, the anger, and rage of Julian and his assistant. It was now only a question what torment could be inflicted upon him in order to cause him the greatest amount of anguish. The most insufferable that could be imagined was to increase the incisions upon his body, a proceeding which was accordingly done until the very entrails appeared. Meantime, Basil ceased not to pour forth his prayers to the Almighty, thanking him for his benefits and beseeching him for his graces to persevere till the end. The sufferings he was subjected to did not deprive him of life. He was cast into prison for the night, whence he was drawn on the following day, only to be pierced to death with sharp instruments, as the most efficacious means of causing him agony.

Basil was not the only one who suffered for the faith at Ancyra during Julian's residence there. Ughellius, Melasippas, Catiurna and 40 others, also endured martyrdom at that time. The pagans throughout the empire understanding from this the disposition of their royal master and the protection he was sure to extend to them, were now led to commit grievous excesses. At Sebaste, in Palestine, they dishonored the tombs of the Christians, exhumed the dead and scattered their remains to the winds. Amongst these was the body of St. John the Baptist, the precursor of our divine Lord. Some of this illustrious saint's relics were afterwards obtained by the abbot Philip, who, not deem-

ing himself worthy to possess so precious a treasure, sent them to Alexandria to St. Athanasius. The fury of the pagans did not content itself with desecrating the monuments of the dead, but showed itself also in the destruction of the churches which they dishonored and burned. In this they were joined by the Jews;* but greater excesses were committed by the pagans, who, after profaning the sacred edifices, consecrated them, in some instances, to their idolatrous worship and erected therein the statues of their false gods. Thus in the cathedral Church of Emessa, as also in the Church of the Epiphany in Syria, the statues of Bacchus were erected and adored by the populace. The extreme to which the pagans were carried in their blind unreflecting hatred of the Christians may be imagined by the account given us by Sozomen of the martyrdom of Eusebius, Nestalis and Tem of Gaza. "The inhabitants of Gaza," writes the historian, "being inflamed with rage against them, dragged them from their houses in which they had concealed themselves and cast them into prison, after having beaten them with unexampled cruelty. They then assembled in the theatre and cried out loudly against them, declaring that they had committed sacrilege in their temple and had used the power with which they were formerly invested to the injury and destruction of paganism. By these declamations the general excitement was increased to such a pitch that they ran to the prison and with unparalleled fury drew forth their victims and dashed them on the ground; and in this position, sometimes with the face and sometimes with the back upon the ground, the victims were dragged through the streets of the city and were afterwards stoned and beaten. I have been told that even women quitted their work to add to their sufferings by

* Belouino, vol v., p. 82.

personal infliction, and that the cooks left their employment to pour boiling water on them and to wound them with their culinary utensils. When the martyrs had been literally torn to pieces and their brains scattered on the ground, their bodies were dragged out of the city and flung on the spot generally used as a receptacle for the bodies of beasts, when a large fire was lighted and their bones mixed with those of asses and camels so that it might be difficult to distinguish them."*

Far more atrocious were the excesses committed by the pagan inhabitants of Heliopolis and Arethusa in Syria. "The inhabitants of Gaza and of Alexandria were not the only citizens who exercised such atrocities against the Christians, as those I have described. The inhabitants of Heliopolis, near Mount Libanus, and of Arethusa in Syria, perpetrated deeds of still greater cruelty. The former were guilty of an act of barbarity which could scarcely be credited had it not been corroborated by the testimony of those who witnessed it. They stripped the holy virgins, who had never been looked upon by the multitude, of their garments and exposed them in a state of nudity as public objects of insult and derision. After numerous other inflictions, they ripped them open and placed inside them the food usually given to pigs, and the animals thus devoured the human entrails in conjunction with their ordinary food. I am convinced that the citizens perpetrated this barbarity against the holy virgins from motives of revenge on account of the abolition of the ancient custom of yielding up virgins to prostitution, when on the eve of marriage, to those to whom they had been betrothed. This custom was prohibited by a law enacted by Constantine after he had destroyed the temple of Venus at Heliopolis and erected a Church upon its ruins."†

* Sozomen, b. v., chap. 9. † Ibid.

The deacon Cyril of the same city of Heliopolis was treated in a like manner, his only crime being his zeal for the propagation of the true faith and the destruction of idolatry. Having slain him, they treated him as they did the holy virgins, by disemboweling him, while some in the fury of their hatred proceeded to the horrible excess of devouring his liver. Those who were guilty of this shocking atrocity were visited by the divine vengeance with the loss of their tongue and eyes. It was at this time that Mark, bishop of Arethusa, was put to death by the populace. This venerable man had long been an object of hatred to the pagans on account of his eminent Christian virtues, but especially for his having destroyed during the preceding reign their favorite temple. When Julian came to the throne the pagan inhabitants immediately understood the advantage they enjoyed and clamored for the re-erection of their idolatrous temple. An edict was accordingly issued to that effect, to avoid which the bishop retired from the place; but finding that the Christians were suffering on his account he hastily returned and offered himself a victim to the fury of the pagans. Instead of admiring this noble and generous conduct, he had no sooner fallen into the hands of his enemies than they loaded him with every indignity, dragged him through the streets and covered him with blows, while his whole body was streaming with blood from the numerous wounds he had received at the hands of his persecutors. They anointed him with honey and raising him upon an eminence left him to be the victim of the burning rays of the sun and the attacks of wasps and flies.

The generosity with which Christians met the attacks made upon their faith and the readiness with which they died therefor, convinced the emperor that if Christianity were to be destroyed and paganism set up in its

stead it must be by dissimulation and cunning rather than by violence and persecution. To make the faithful fall almost insensibly was accordingly the object aimed at by the emperor. To this end he rendered pagan, as far as was in his power, every thing that Christians would be necessitated to employ or use. Thus he had the fountains every-where in and around the city of Antioch consecrated by abominable rites to pagan gods and goddesses, so that the Christians might feel that in using the water they were denying their faith and guilty of apostasy. The same he ordered to be done in the case of the articles of provision offered for sale in the markets, all being sprinkled with the lustral waters employed in the service of the gods. He did not indeed order any incense to be burned before a purchase could be made and in this he failed in his purpose. For the Christians instructed by their teachers paid little attention to the efforts of the emperor and bought, with a safe conscience, the goods offered for sale.*

The ordinance, however, was the source of much annoyance to many and led to the glorious martyrdom of several of the faithful, amongst whom were Juventus and Maximin, officers of the imperial guard. These brave Christians, having expressed themselves on a public occasion a little too freely in condemnation of the course pursued by Julian, were immediately arrested and conducted into the emperor's presence. Being asked to account for their conduct, they fearlessly replied as follows: " Having received a holy education in the bosom of the Church and never having obeyed any but the virtuous laws of Constantine and his royal sons, we cannot behold without sensible sorrow the abomination with which you are filling the empire. We are grieved at witnessing your horrible sacrifices and the means you adopt to pollute the

* Belouino.

blessings of God to men and even the necessaries of life. It is on account of these misfortunes that we have long since wept in secret and that we now take the liberty to reproach your majesty." Julian was beside himself with rage on hearing this discourse. He immediately ordered the out-spoken confessors to be tortured, and so effectively were his orders obeyed that the saints, died under the hands of their executioners. To remove the odium attaching to the persecution of religion, Julian attempted to make it appear that their punishment was in consequence of the indignity offered by them to his royal person. Thus he sought to deprive them, at least in the eyes of men, of the glory and honor attaching to martyrdom, but in this he signally failed, for the Christians of the place erected a magnificent monument to the memory of the martyrs.

Several others for a like frankness of speech were persecuted by Julian, though not to the same extent. Of the latter was Valentinian who afterwards succeeded to the empire. This virtuous Christian was banished by Julian for having resented the indignity offered him in being sprinkled with lustral water while attending his majesty on a public occasion.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JEWS ARE EMBOLDENED TO PERSECUTE THE FAITHFUL—THE CHURCH OF ANTIOCH CLOSED BY ORDER OF THE EMPEROR—A PROPHECY THAT THE EMPEROR WOULD PERISH IN WAR—ATHANASIUS RETURNS TO HIS SEE OF ALEXANDRIA, WHENCE HE HAD BEEN BANISHED—HE IS BANISHED FROM ALL EGYPT BY JULIAN—THE EMPEROR'S UNCLE, COUNT JULIAN, IS STRICKEN BY GOD AND DIES A HORRIBLE DEATH—JULIAN PREPARES FOR WAR AGAINST PERSIA, AND RESOLVES TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM—THE JEWS SET ABOUT THE WORK WITH GREAT VIGOR, BUT ARE DEFEATED BY THE MIRACULOUS INTERPOSITION OF HEAVEN—JULIAN GOES TO PERSIA AND IS KILLED—HIS LAST MOMENTS—HOW HE DIED.

In the preceding chapter the reader learned how, with the connivance of the emperor, the pagans and Jews were emboldened to destroy several Christian places of worship, and to offer indignities to the bodies of the departed. Here the same will be seen to have been done by the emperor's own commands. At Daphne, a beautiful village on the Orontes, was a temple dedicated to Apollo. The fable connected with it tells of how the daughter of Ladon was there changed into a tree, while pursued by the enamoured Phœbean god, who, to console himself for the loss, fixed his abode in the locality. The softness of the climate, the purity of the air, the shady groves, added to the numerous limpid streams and abundant flowers of every variety that abounded in the locality, had a voluptuous tendency and exercised, it is said, such an influence on the inhabitants, that persons of stern and rigid morals shunned it as a dangerous rendezvous. However far such physical advantages and the history of the place may have

a tendency of this nature, it might be difficult to say, but certain it is that the morals of the inhabitants were of the most lascivious and reprehensible kind. To such an extent did custom tolerate and justify vice, that concubinage was the rule and marriage the exception, while those who lived without a mistress were socially fallen and avoided by society.

During the preceding reign, when Gallus was raised to the dignity of Cæsar by Constantius, he fixed his abode at Antioch, and being a virtuous Christian, set himself to reclaiming the morals of the people and checking the abomination which till then had commonly existed. To this end he erected at Daphne a temple dedicated to the worship of the true God, and had transported thither, the body of the martyr Babylas, who had been bishop of Antioch. From that moment the demon was powerless; he was no longer able to utter his oracles as before. The silence was attributed to the omission of the customary sacrifice; but this was subsequently found to be only an imaginary impediment, for when Julian, on his arrival at Antioch, visited the temple and had offered the necessary libations, he learned from the demon that he was silent because of the place being filled with the dead. The emperor was not slow in interpreting the evil one's answer; he knew it referred to the presence of the body of the martyr, and he accordingly ordered its removal. The Christians had no option. If they refused to comply, the martyr's remains would be profaned by pagan hands and scattered to the winds. Accordingly at the invitation of their chief pastor, the faithful of Antioch assembled in great numbers and forming themselves into a processional body, accompanied the translation of the martyr's body, while chanting the words of the psalmist: "Let them be all confounded who adore graven things and who glory

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in their idols." This Julian resented as a personal insult and in his anger ordered the arrest of several of the faithful, whom he had cruelly tortured. Amongst these was a youth named Theodore, whose Christian heroism rendered him especially remarkable, he being visibly sustained during the contest by the presence of an angelic spirit. Julian's anger was not appeased by the imprisonment and torture of the Christians, but showed itself now in a different manner by ordering the governor of the district to commit to the flames and to utterly destroy the Christian places of worship in the immediate vicinity of the temple of Apollo. He further ordered the cathedral closed, after having pillaged the same and transported its valuables to his treasury. It was his uncle, the Count Julian, also an apostate, who carried this order into effect, and the indignities that officer was guilty of on the occasion are unparalleled, for after casting the sacred vessels on the ground and otherwise marking his contempt for the house of God, he ended by committing an unmentionable nuisance against the sacred altar. Such horrible profanations were sure to draw down upon their author the vengeance of heaven, and hence we are not astonished at reading of this creature being afterward stricken with an incurable disease, expiring in despair, eaten by worms, and exhaling an intolerable stench. Such was the death of the man who defiled the temple of Antioch.

After the church of Antioch was closed by order of the emperor, and the clergy dispersed, one of the number, a priest, by name Theodoret, managed to gain an entrance, and celebrated there the divine mysteries. When this was reported to the emperor's uncle, he had him arrested and cruelly tormented. Amongst other tortures inflicted, he had his sides burnt with lighted torches, but while this was being done a sudden fear seized upon the executioners and,

the burning brands dropping from their hands, they fell prostrate on the ground. On coming to themselves, when ordered to resume their work, they tremblingly begged to be relieved, pleading in excuse the vision they had seen of four angels robed in white and assisting the martyr while they were torturing him. Upon hearing this answer the count was infuriated, and ordered them to be immediately drowned. It was then that Theodoret predicted the uncle's and nephew's death. "You," said he addressing himself to the count, "shall render up your soul amidst the bitterest suffering, while your nephew the emperor shall be overcome in the war he is engaging in against the Persians. An unknown hand shall strike him, and his body shall remain unburied in a strange land." *

Hardened in crime as the subjects of these prophecies were, the words of the martyr still made a deep and serious impression upon them. The count from that moment became sullen and agitated. There was still enough of the Christian about him to cause him to fear for his conduct. On the following day he accompanied the emperor, according to custom, to the temple of the idols, but his soul was overshadowed and plunged in an abyss of fear. On some of the sacrificial meats being offered to him, he barely touched them, and hastened from the place as soon as was possible only to shut himself up in the palace. That night he was seized with a violent pain in the bowels, accompanied by a violent retching, during which he vomited, by morsels, his liver. This was a prelude to the more horrible disease under which, as has been asserted, he expired, his body being eaten by worms and emitting a horrible stench.

The martyr's prediction was, in like manner, literally fulfilled in regard to the emperor, as we shall afterwards see.

* See Mabillon, tom. iv.

The course taken by Julian in persecuting the Christians, and particularly his acts of violence in martyring some, emboldened the pagans and encouraged them to the commission of like excesses. Thus at Gaza the hatred of the idolators showed itself against the faithful in the death inflicted upon the three brothers, Eustebius, Nestabus, and Teno. On the plea that these had insulted their religion, and profaned their temples, the populace, wild with rage, rushed furiously on them, dragged them by the feet through the streets, discharging upon them all manner of insult and indignity, and finally, having proceeded with them without the city, consumed their remains. The indignities offered them on the way to death is thus described in their Acts: "Some attacked them with stones, others struck them on the heads with sticks. The very women left their dwellings and thrust into their eyes their spindles and bodkins. Cooks might be seen running with vessels of boiling water to throw on their bodies, while others again, of the same class, pierced them with their spits. In fine, after having made them the sport of their cruelty, they dragged them outside the city to the place where the dead bodies of beasts are usually cast. There they made a great fire and burned the martyrs' remains, mixing the bones which remained after the fire had done its work with those of animals in order that they could not be recognized." The great antipathy of the idolators to the faith of the martyrs is particularly noticeable in the latter circumstance. But in vain did they endeavor to discredit the sacred remains, for a Christian woman inspired by God hastened to the place and having obtained, by divine illumination, the veritable remains of the martyrs, placed them in the hands of their kinsman Teno, who, afterwards becoming bishop of Magime, erected a church in which he placed the relics of these his martyred relatives. At first the people

were apprehensive lest their act might draw upon them the displeasure of the emperor, whose entire policy, though hating the faithful as much if not more than any of his predecessors, was to abstain from all manner of violence. But from this they were quickly relieved on learning that Julian gave expression to the sentiment that after all they had only taken vengeance for the insults offered to their gods, by slaying a couple of Galileans.

It was about this time that Amaquius, governor of Phrygia, ordered opened an idolatrous temple which had been closed during the preceding reign. The Christians were very much grieved thereat and, in their zeal, three of their number, Macedonius, Theododus, and Latien, entered by night and overturning the idolatrous images broke them in pieces. This irritated the governor exceedingly, and caused him to issue an order for the arrest of all the Christians of the place whom he immediately cast into prison. To save their brethren from suffering, the real authors of the act came forward and avowed their deed, declaring their readiness to die if necessary for what they had done. It was proposed to them to sacrifice as an atonement for the insult they had offered to the gods, but this they indignantly spurned. Thereupon the governor resorted to the utmost extreme of cruelty, by having them roasted alive on an iron grate placed over a blazing fire prepared for that purpose.. While undergoing their excruciating tortures, they addressed their inhuman tormentor in the words of Lawrence: "Thou canst now, Amaquius, taste and see if we are sufficiently cooked, and if you find that we are not to your taste, you can turn us on the other side."

While these excesses were being perpetrated, Athanasius, who had been banished from Alexandria during the reign of Constantius, now returned to his see. The sanc-

tity and zeal of this venerable prelate were quickly felt in the city and appeared in the numerous conversions both from paganism and heresy that speedily followed. This was a source of continual annoyance to the enemies of the true faith, and every means was employed to arrest the propagation of the divine word. The priests and magistrates of paganism assembled in great numbers in their respective temples, and offered numerous sacrifices to prevent the defections taking place in their ranks; but this proving unavailing, the gods remaining deaf to their prayers, they deemed it advisable to write to the emperor, and acquaint him of the state of affairs. To their prayer, Julian returned the following answer. "It were, indeed, manifestly proper that a man banished definitely by the edicts of several emperors should wait at least for another royal edict before returning home and carrying his audacity so far as to ignore the existence of law. We have, indeed, recently permitted the Galileans exiled by our predecessor Constance, to return but not to their respective churches. But now we understand that the fiery Athanasius, carried away by his usual temerity, has gone, to the great joy of the religious people of Alexandria, to take possession of what he calls his episcopal throne. Wherefore we order him to quit the city the very day he receives this our command. If he resists, we shall condemn him to the severest and most rigorous chastisement."

On receiving this document the holy bishop was ready to obey, but the people were unwilling to allow him to depart, and thinking that the emperor might relent, they wrote supplicating him to permit Athanasius to remain in the city. Their hopes were in vain, as the reader may learn from the following answer returned by the emperor to their petition: "Since you recognise as leader a man of the character of those who in contempt of their own laws have

departed from all justice, living in open rebellion and preaching unheard-of doctrines you are not in a position to demand Athanasius. Inasmuch as Alexander founded your city and since you have as your tutelary divinities the god Serapis and the virgin Isis who reign with him over all Egypt, how can you dare speak in the name of your country whose glory you so poorly defend? I blush to think that any of you, O Alexandrians, should avow himself a Galilean. What! The ancestors of the Hebrews bore formerly the yoke of the Egyptians, and you the descendants of the ancient rulers of Egypt, in contempt of your ancient constitutions, servilely submit yourselves of your own accord to the detractors of your hereditary dogmas. You forget those happy times of your prosperity when you enjoyed every blessing because Egypt was obedient to the gods. Tell me what services these men have rendered your city who have introduced amongst you a doctrine so novel and foreign to your customs. Certainly, the pious Macedonian, who laid the foundation of Alexandria, did not resemble any of these men, not even those Jews who were much better. And Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, was not inferior. Alexander would have made the Romans tremble if he had had an opportunity. And how many favors have you not received from the Ptolemys who succeeded your founder? They watched over the infancy of your city as if it were their own offspring, and in order to found it, to increase it, to give it the form of government it enjoys to-day, they were not under the necessity of employing for that purpose the dogmas of Jesus or the doctrines of the odious Galileans. At the third epoch of your history, that in which the Romans conquered your city and wrested it from the Ptolemys who then governed it so badly, Augustus addressing the citizens employed this language: 'O Alexandrians, I abstain from all violence toward you out of

respect for the great god Serapis, as also out of respect for the people and the grandeur of the city. A third motive is the good will which my friend Arius bears towards you. This Arius, your fellow-citizen and a philosopher, was in effect the confidant of Cæsar Augustus. Such are, so to speak, in a few words the special advantages for which you are beholding to the god of Olympus. I should never end were I to recount all in detail. I shall speak now of the daily favors which are common to you. I do not say to each individual generation or city, but to the entire universe upon which the same gods have bestowed them. How can you close your eyes against these? Can you be insensible to the light of day? Can you forget that the sun is the author of winter and summer as well as of the universal life of plants and animals? Would you forget the advantage the moon is to your country? Nevertheless you do not deign to worship any of these gods; but on the contrary you dare to worship that Jesus, whom neither you nor your fathers have ever seen. Furthermore, you neglect that being whom from all eternity man is accustomed to behold, to contemplate, to honor as the source of all the blessings he receives. I mean the great sun, the living, animated, intelligent and beneficent image of the spirit, the father of beings. Here I invite you to listen to me, however, little you may desire to walk in the path of truth. Assuredly you are not in danger of being misled in taking for your guide him who, till his twentieth year, followed the same course as yourselves, but who, thanks to the gods, has abandoned it for the last twelve years.* Your docility in accepting advice shall do you honor. But if you persist in your superstitions and in the doctrines of your deceivers, at least remain united amongst yourselves and cease asking for Athanasius.

* Referring to his own apostasy.

You will have still a sufficient number of disciples whose discourses will be able to tickle your ears. Would to heaven that the dangerous influence of the school of Athanasius was fatal only to himself: but it is exercised over a considerable number of you, a matter very easy to be explained, for no other that you could select as interpreter of the Scriptures could possibly be worse than he whom you desire at the present moment. But if you demand him back for some new intrigue (for in effect I understand that he is well versed in chicanery) understand that it is precisely for that very reason that he has been banished the city. The presence of a zealot, greedy of glory, would be too inconvenient; and for a much stronger reason the presence of a pretentious man such as he is, who though despicable in station, yet tries to give himself importance by braving the dangers which he has brought on himself. Now such conduct is the index of rebellion, and in order that nothing of that nature might happen amongst you we have ordered him, a considerable time since, to leave the city, and now we banish him from all Egypt. Let this be made known to the citizens of Alexandria.'"

To see that the foregoing was carried into effect, Julian wrote to the prefect holding him responsible for its execution: "Julian to Ecdicius, prefect of Egypt—If you have neglected up to the present to inform me about matters of interest, at least you should have written to me concerning this Athanasius, the enemy of the gods, inasmuch as you have been long since informed of our solemn edicts. I swear, then, by the great Serapis, that if before the calends of December, this Athanasius has not quitted the city or rather Egypt, I will punish by a fine of a hundred pounds of gold the legion under your command. You know well, that if I hesitate before condemning, it is with difficulty that I pardon any whom I have once condemned. I behold with

pain that at Athanasius' hands is accomplished what is calculated to bring the gods into disrepute. Hence of all your official duties in the country, none will please me better than the expulsion of Athanasius out of Egypt. I say the expulsion of this miserable man who, during my reign, has dared to baptize the most illustrious ladies of Greece."

The anger of the emperor against Athanasius is satisfactorily accounted for in the last line of this communication to the prefect. The saint dared to baptize some of the influential pagans: this was his crime, and for this he had to be expelled the country. In obedience to the decree, the saint quitted the city and embarked on the Nile, with the view of proceeding to the Thebais. But he had not proceeded very far when he learned that private instructions had been given to slay him, and that the would-be assassins were already in his pursuit. He was advised by his friends to hasten his flight, or to secrete himself in some of the villages on the banks of the river. To neither did he accede; but with a promptitude and decision which could be hardly attributed to anything but divine inspiration, he turned his course and rowed back to the city in the face of the enemy already in his pursuit. He had not proceeded very far when he encountered his adversary, who, upon inquiring if he had met with Athanasius, was informed by the prelate that he was not very far distant. This equivocal answer saved the patriarch's life, for while it threw the assassin off his guard and caused him to continue his pursuit, it enabled Athanasius to reach the city and secrete himself from the fury of his enemy. There he remained till the death of Julian, when he again assumed the government of his diocese.

Shortly after the saint's return and during his concealment the hand of God made itself felt against the enemies of

holy Church. The first to experience the divine vengeance was the emperor's uncle, the Count Julian, whose death we already referred to as being distressing in the extreme, he being eaten by worms, and exhaling a stench which prevented his attendants from approaching him. Felix the superintendent was the next to suffer for his crimes. He died of the rupture of a blood vessel which took him off at the end of a day. Julian was at this time at Antioch making preparations for his Persian campaign. The conquest of Persia, however, was not the only affair that engrossed his attention at that moment. There was another object still dearer to his mind, but far more difficult of attainment, as being wholly impossible. That was the falsification of the prophecies regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. It had been foretold by our Divine Lord that the temple would be destroyed and remain forever in ruins, and that a stone should not remain upon a stone therof. To falsify this would be to falsify the Christian religion. This Julian was aware of, and in his insane hatred of divine truth, he resolved upon rebuilding the temple. For this purpose he had the good will, the aid and liberal donations of all the Jewish people. Humanly speaking, nothing was easier and more certain of accomplishment, but God in his divine omnipotence disconcerted all his plans and rendered futile all his efforts, as we shall presently see. Before quitting Constantinople for Antioch, the emperor addressed the following letter to the Jews of all classes and countries: "Julian to the Jewish people.—I presume that the yoke of servitude which for a long time has weighed upon you is less insupportable than the unconstitutional tax by which you have been obliged to pay into the public treasury exorbitant sums. Having occular testimony of this abuse, I have known it by the lists prepared against you. I have then, in the first place, proscribed a new impost which was

about being charged upon you, and I have set aside the odious tax by taking from the archives myself and burning the originals, so that no one can hereafter crush you with vexatious imposts. I do not refer the cause of these things to my brother Constance of honorable memory, but rather to his favorites and companions, men of barbarous character and impious mind. Hence I have had them arrested and cast into prison, in order that no trace of their existence may remain amongst us. I have extended my kindness in your regard still farther. I have signified to Julius, your brother and venerable patriarch, to abolish the exaction which you style the right of apostleship, and I have prohibited all from gathering this for the future, in order that enjoying a perfect tranquillity during my reign you may be free to address for me your most ardent supplications to the Lord of the universe whose divine hand has deigned to place on my brow the imperial crown. Care naturally enchains the human faculties and prevents man from raising his suppliant hands towards heaven, while on the other hand, a people free from all disquietude is disposed to demand from the Most High prosperity for the empire which is the great object of our care. Form then an unanimous resolution so that after the Persian war which I desire to speedily terminate with advantage to myself, I may be able to build the holy city of Jerusalem so long in ruins, and to dwell there myself and offer in common with you my homage to the supreme being."

Nothing it is true, was said expressly in the foregoing about the immediate rebuilding of the temple, but that this was the object of the letter is plain from the emperor's subsequent conduct. On his way from the imperial city to Antioch, Julian summoned to his presence several of the principal Jews and manifested to them his desire that their sacrifices should be resumed. To this they replied by affirming that

it was not permitted them to offer sacrifices out of their own country or elsewhere than in their temple at Jerusalem. "But," added they, "rebuild the temple of Jerusalem and we will offer the same sacrifices that our ancestors offered." A double incentive was here offered to Julian to begin the work. His hatred of the Christian religion and the truth of which he sought to falsify by falsifying the prophecy regarding the temple urged him on the one hand, while his natural vanity of being the author of so important an achievement stimulated him on the other. The emperor accordingly entered with vigor on his bootless task. In the month of July, 362, he gave orders to his treasurer to supply the necessary means for commencing the work, the governor of the province being commanded to lend to the enterprise the whole weight of his official authority.

The Jews on their part were no less zealous for the accomplishment of the projected enterprise. From all parts they flocked to Jerusalem to aid in what they regarded as a great national and religious undertaking. Such was the enthusiasm the project excited that the women parted with their jewels and ornaments in order to advance it. Nothing was considered too precious or good for so glorious a cause. It is even asserted that, to mark their appreciation of the object, the very spades, mattocks, and baskets for removing the rubbish were in some instances of silver. Full of pride and confidence, those engaged in the work talked and thought of nothing else but the triumph of their religion and the establishment of the suspended sacrifices. For several months the preparatory work, which consisted of removing the debris of the ruined temple, continued. By the month of January, 363, the work had progressed so far that all the old foundations were removed and excavations were being made for new ones. Little did those engaged on the work at that moment imagine that they were the very instruments

in the hands of the Lord for the fulfillment of his prophecy. It had been predicted by the Savior that not a stone would remain upon a stone of the temple—a divine utterance which was fulfilled to the letter by the foundations being removed on the occasion I speak of. But what was then to prevent the reconstruction of the temple? Certainly nothing human. There was at hand for that purpose all that could be required for an undertaking of the kind; there were men and material in abundance, funds more than sufficient, and a resolution and determination such as have not been manifested since in any national or religious undertaking. Under such circumstances it was no wonder that weak-minded Christians should have asked themselves if the words of the Redeemer were to be taken in their rigorous and literal sense. But Cyril, who was then bishop of Jerusalem, had no such misgivings; he knew the import of the Savior's prophetic prediction, and he knew that, in consequence, the temple would never again be erected. The operations of the workmen were, therefore, no cause of alarm to him. He was entirely convinced that at the proper moment God would confound their efforts. The result proved how correctly he judged. After the workmen had removed the whole of the old foundation, and were employed in laying the new, they were arrested by a series of prodigies which forced them to abandon the work. Terrific balls of fire bursting from the trenches and exploding, overturned the newly-laid foundations, burned the workmen and prevented their assistants from approaching. The account given of the occurrence by the contemporary pagan writer Ammen is worthy of attention: "Julian, providing for all by his continual solicitude and knowing how to apply himself to several enterprises at the same time, while he prosecuted with vigor his preparations for the expedition against the Parthians, resolved upon leaving to posterity a monument

of his glory, by reconstructing at great expense the famous temple of Jerusalem, which after several bloody encounters, Vespasian, and after him Titus who conducted the seige of that city, and had carried by force totally ruined. Ju lian confided the care of the new building to a certain Alipius of Antioch, an ancient prefect in Britain. Whilst this official aided by the governor of the province hastened the construction of the edifice, frightful globes of fire, bursting forth shook, by repeated shocks the foundations, burned some of the workmen, prevented others from approaching, and forced those interested to abandon the work."

This was followed by a terrible tempest which carried away the lime and mortar they had amassed at great expense. But these evidences of the divine displeasure did not entirely disconcert the Jews. With a zeal and a determination worthy of a better cause, they set themselves to work again to lay other foundations. They had already prepared the trenches, but again God confounded them, for a dreadful earthquake occurring at that moment the trenches were filled with the debris, the materials were scattered, and numbers of the workmen killed by the falling of houses. Still the Jews persisted in their vain and senseless endeavours; but the wrath of God now smote them more terribly than ever. Balls of fire burst forth from all quarters, whereever they attempted to prepare a foundation, and being hurled upon them by an invisible hand, burned a vast number of them at the same time that the fire consumed their mechanical implements. It was then that they found themselves necessitated to desist from their impious enterprise. On the day following this latter occurrence a luminous cross, surrounded by a circle of light stretching from Calvary to Olivet, appeared in the heavens. This was followed by another equally marvelous circumstance whereby

luminous crosses, which it was found impossible to obliterate, were impressed upon the garments of all.

It is not difficult to conceive the chagrin that Julian must have felt on learning of the failure of his favorite project. In a letter addressed to a pagan priest he writes in a bantering style of the Jews and accuses their prophets of ignorance in not being able to state why the temple could not be rebuilt. It was indeed very easy to learn it, if really disposed, but Julian's eyes were closed and he could not see in the prodigies that occurred the divine displeasure of the Most High.

Julian now directed his attention to his Persian expedition. In March of the year 363, he set out on his journey. He had it in his intention, if we are to credit the ancient writers, to institute upon his return a bitter persecution of the faithful. He would have deprived them of all liberty, have interdicted their public and private assemblies, and have rendered it impossible for them to transact the ordinary business of every day life, such as buying and selling, unless at the expense of apostasy by offering incense to the idols. St. Gregory Nazianzen assures us that he intended going even further and making a general holocaust, to his god, of the Christians. Be that as it may, it is certain that his intentions were not of the most favorable kind: but whatever they were, he was prevented from putting them into execution in consequence of his tragic and untimely end.

At the date above mentioned, Julian set out from Antioch and hastened with much expedition towards the frontiers of Persia. Before starting, he despatched a boastful, pompous communication to Arsaces king of Armenia, soliciting his aid and reminding him of what he had to expect if he refused. While proceeding to the confines of the Persian empire, his attention was mainly directed to proselytizing

the inhabitants of the various towns through which he passed. He made every effort to lead the people to the worship of the false gods, and, whenever his efforts were attended with success, the locality was enriched by special marks of his favor. On his way through Assyria, his expedition was pre-eminently successful: several towns and fortresses fell into his hands, all of which he thoughtlessly pillaged and burned, forgetting that on his return their aid might be needful and necessary to him. A short time after passing the city of Ctesiphon, on the banks of the Tigris, he encountered the enemy. Many losses were sustained upon both sides, but Julian was necessitated to retire. His object now was to reach as speedily as possible the Roman frontier, but being unacquainted with the topography of the country he found it necessary to employ as guides some of the Persian prisoners. These led him through routes where he found an abundance of provisions and would have eventually conducted him in safety into his own country had it not been for the patriotism and self-sacrificing daring of one of their kinsmen. This was an old, venerable Persian who resolved to compass the ruin of Julian and his army at the cost of his own life. To this end he allowed himself to be taken prisoner, with the view of obtaining the position of guide. The event fully answered his plans. He was captured, and, upon offering for the sake of a pardon to conduct the army by the shortest road to the Roman frontier, his age and experience being in his favor, his services were cheerfully accepted and the lives of all placed in his hands. For three or four days he assured the emperor the road would present numerous difficulties, during which period it would be necessary to bring the needed provisions. But at the end of that time they would reach a fertile land where every necessary of life, for man and beast, could be had in abundance. The emperor unsuspectingly readily

allowed himself to be deceived. He put the most implicit confidence in the old man's words, and in doing so, as we shall presently see, was hastening to his own destruction. At the end of three days, when the fertile region should have been reached, Julian saw the trap into which he had fallen. Instead of a luxurious country, abounding in all the necessaries of life, the army found itself in a desert, inhospitable region. Behind them was the enemy pressing on in their rear, before them an arid desert waste while, as regarded provisions they had nearly exhausted their store. Nothing remained but to retrace their steps and this they could do only by fighting. In the conflict that ensued, Julian met his death. By whom the fatal blow was given was never known. Some referred it to a Persian, some to a Saracen, and some even to a member of the Roman army, who, indignant at the blunder committed by his commander, took this method of showing his displeasure. The circumstance is thus described by Sozomen: "The Roman troops were now worn out by the length of the journey and the scarcity of provisions, and the Persians chose this moment to attack them. In the heat of the conflict which ensued, a violent wind arose and the sky and the sun were totally concealed by the clouds, while the air was at the same time filled with dust. During the darkness which was thus produced, a horseman riding at full gallop directed his lance against the emperor and wounded him mortally; he then rode from the field and no one knew whither he went."

Finding himself mortally wounded, Julian took, it is said, some of the blood that trickled from the wound and flinging it up towards heaven blasphemously exclaimed, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" meaning the Redeemer. This is questioned by many who affirm that his act was directed against the sun which he regarded as a god, and whose protection was wanting to him on that occasion.

Others again regard the entire circumstance as fabulous, on the grounds that Marcella and Eutropius, who were present on the occasion and who gave an account of the emperor's death, do not as much as allude to it at all.

Having had himself conveyed to his tent in his last moments, he addressed his attendants in the following boastful and superstitious style: "Dear companions, nature demands of me what it has lent. I restore it with the joy of a debtor who discharges his obligations and not with the grief and regret the greater part of men consider inseparable from the state in which I am. Philosophy has convinced me that the soul is not truly happy till it is liberated from the body, and that one ought to rather rejoice than to be afflicted when the superior part is liberated from the inferior which degrades it. I also remember that the gods have often sent death to the virtuous as the greatest recompense they could accord to virtue. I accept it as a work of favor. They desire to spare me the sorrows which should doubtless happen to me or to prevent me from committing any unworthy action. I die without remorse, because I have lived without crime as well during the time of my disgrace when I was banished from the court and necessitated to dwell in exile. My strength is abandoning me; I cannot address you any longer. As to the election of an emperor I have not anticipated your desires. But as a good citizen I desire to be replaced by a worthy successor." Thus passed out of life, in a strange land, slain by an unknown hand, and without a sentiment of sorrow for his transgressions, Julian surnamed the Apostate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOVIAN SUCCEEDS TO THE THRONE—HE DIES—HE IS SUCCEEDED BY VALENTINIAN—VALENS ASSOCIATED IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE EMPIRE—HE WORKS IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS HERETICAL PARTY—THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS BANISHED FROM THEIR SEES IN THE EAST—ATHANASIUS WITHDRAWS FROM ALEXANDRIA—VIOLENCE AND CRUELTY OF THE ARIANS—THEIR HATRED OF BASIL OF CÆSAREA—ATHANASIUS DIES—THE EFFORTS OF THE ARIANS TO GET ONE OF THEIR OWN PARTY APPOINTED TO THE SEE—PERSECUTION OF THE FAITHFUL BY THE HERETICS—ATHANARIC KING OF THE VISIGOTHS PERSECUTES THE CHRISTIANS—THE ARABS AND ETHIOPIANS PERSECUTE—RENEWAL OF PERSECUTION BY VALENS—HIS MISERABLE DEATH—HE IS SUCCEEDED BY GRATIAN—PERSECUTION CEASES—THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS RECALLED—THEODOSIUS ASSOCIATED IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE EMPIRE—ALL REQUIRED TO EMBRACE THE ROMAN FAITH—COUNCIL OF CONSTANTIONOPLE—THE WESTERN PROVINCES REVOLT—THE ARIANS AIDED BY THE EMPRESS JUSTINA PERSECUTE THE FAITHFUL—THE NUMBERS THAT DIED FOR THE FAITH IN PERSIA.

The death of Julian was the fall of paganism. Its apparent vitality during his reign was entirely due to the patronage he bestowed upon it: this withdrawn, the entire system collapsed and speedily fell into merited contempt.

The late emperor was succeeded by Jovian, a devout and zealous Catholic, whose highest ambition was to propagate the true faith through his extensive empire. It is said that upon being offered the symbols of the imperial power, he refused on the ground of being a Christian, but this objection was immediately overruled and the army, moreover, declared itself Christian.

The newly-elected emperor's first care was directed toward extricating his army from its perilous position. This he did by ceding to the enemy five provinces and

two towns along the Tigris. This was regarded by some as a shameful arrangement; but it was necessary under the circumstances. In a desert country, destitute of provisions and a powerful enemy pressing on his rear, nothing remained but to yield to the demands of his adversary.

On reaching his own country, he was beset by the sectaries, seeking his favor and protection; but to these he returned the uniform answer that he was a Catholic and the protector of that faith set forth in the council of Nice. His first care now was to restore to the Church its former liberty and splendor. This he did by annulling Julian's restrictive enactments, and restoring to the churches and clergy the privileges they enjoyed under Constantius and his sons. Knowing by experience how the impiety of his predecessors had invoked the wrath of heaven upon the nation, he ordered all the pagan temples to be closed, and the bloody sacrifices to cease, taking occasion at the same time to instruct the governors of the provinces to see that the Christians should assemble without molestation in their respective churches. Another of his favorable enactments was the making it a capital offense for any to marry or dishonor a holy virgin dedicated to the immediate service of God. This was in view of the abuses that existed during his predecessor's reign, whereby several took to themselves as wives, persons who had been consecrated to God.* During eight months, the pious emperor thus continued to legislate for the interests of the Church, but at the expiration of that period, while on his way to Constantinople, he died suddenly at Dadastanis, in Bithynia.†

At the expiration, of ten days, upon the arrival of the troops at Nicea, Valentinian was proclaimed emperor. He associated with himself in the government of the empire, his brother Valens. They were of different creeds, the for-

* Sozomen, p. 255.

† Ibid, p. 258.

mer being a Catholic and the latter an Arian, a circumstance which, as we shall presently see, was very detrimental to the interests of divine truth. On assuming the reins of authority, Valentinian celebrated his elevation to the purple, by according liberty of conscience to all, the only restriction placed upon any being that of abstaining from the immolation of animals, and the holding of nocturnal assemblies. By this wise and liberal policy, he won for himself the good-will and attachment of all classes of his subjects, nor was he prevented by this from advancing the interests of Catholics. For amongst his first acts, was a revocation of the Julian law, whereby the faithful were debarred from the study of letters, while he also relieved his brethren from the odious obligation imposed upon them during the former reign, whereby they were necessitated to guard the pagan temples against the violence of their co-religionists. He also accorded the Church the enjoyment of the laws in force under Constantine and Constance, thereby securing to the clergy an immunity from imposts, in regard to their persons and chattels.

Valens, on the other hand, was working in the interests of his party. Having control of the eastern part of the empire, he had an ample field for the exercise of his hatred of Catholics. Completely under the sway of Eudoxius, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, by whom he was baptized, he committed the grossest injustice against the Catholic party. For refusing to communicate with Eudoxius, bishops were every-where driven from their sees and banished into exile. In the West, the emperor's orders received no opposition, but in the East it was different; for when the imperial command was being put into execution, in the case of Athanasius of Alexandria, such was the tumult that was raised that the prefect judged it prudent to desist, and to leave the venerable prelate unmolested.

A few days after, when the excitement had subsided, Athanasius secrectly withdrew from the city, and secreted himself in the country. It was fortunate he did, for the officers of the law, taking advantage of the stillness of the night and the general quiet into which the city had settled, made a descent upon the patriarch's dwelling, seized upon his church and made a vigilant but fruitless search through the premises for his person. Being informed of these violent proceedings, and not deeming himself safe where he was, Athanasius withdrew and secreted himself in his father's sepulchre.* There he abode for the space of four months, till Valens, fearing the displeasure of Valentinian and possibly a popular tumult, ordered his return. This relaxation of the imperial orders by no means indicated a change of sentiment on the part of Valens; it was merely the effect of fear, as his whole subsequent conduct clearly demonstrated, A single instance is enough to establish this, and to show how unchanged and anti-Catholic the sentiments of Valens remained. Eudoxius, dying in 370, was replaced by one of his own party, Demophile, bishop of Berie, in Thrace. The Catholics, on the other hand, elected to the position Evagius, but the knowledge of this was no sooner made known to the emperor, than he banished that prelate, and sent him to exile. Emboldened by the emperor's support, the Arians now set no bounds to their violence, and when a deputation of eighty ecclesiastics was sent to Valens to complain thereof, instead of listening to their prayer and redressing their grievances, he ordered the whole party to be arrested and executed. Modestus, the officer to whom this work was intrusted, fearing a popular commotion, had recourse to a ruse. He pretended it was the emperor's will that they should be sent into banishment, and to this end he embarked them on board a vessel. The crew had secret

* Belouino, vol. 5, p. 174.

orders to abandon them in the open sea and to fire the vessel. This they did, and after taking possession of the boat, left eighty ecclesiastics to perish by flames or by water. This occurred in the year 370, on the coast of Bithynia.*

The violence and cruelties perpetrated against the Catholics by Valens and his party, will be best understood from a passage of the writings of St. Gregory Nazianzen. Apostrophizing those enemies of divine truth, the saint says: "The books and writings of the age are filled with the effects of your barbarity. Posterity shall understand them and will cover you, as I am certain, with everlasting infamy. Can anything similar be said of the Catholics? What people have we stirred up against you? What soldiers have we armed to fight against you? Have we sent against you a furious general and more violent than those whose orders he executed—a man who not being Christian thought he was discharging a religious duty towards the demon by his persecution of the Catholics? Have we besieged with troops, persons, whose hands raised towards heaven, thought only of offering their prayers to God? Have we stifled the chant of the psalms by the noise of the trumpet? Have we mingled the mystic blood of Christ with the blood of the slain? Where have we caused to cease the spiritual lamentations by lugubrious and lamentable cries? Where have we arrested the tears of compunction in order to shed tragic ones? Where have we changed churches into sepulchres? When have we delivered into criminal hands the vessels appointed for the sacred mysteries and which it is not permitted laics to touch? Beautiful altars, as the divine word calls you, but which we now can call dishonored! Venerable and august chair, in which so many illustrious and holy prelates have successively sat in order to preach the divine mysteries, have we placed in

* Sozomen, p. 272.

you a pagan in order to ridicule by satiric and impious discourses the Christian truth? Holy virgins, tabernacles of purity and modesty, who cannot suffer the presence of men, even the chastest, you are witnesses whether any of ours have ever outraged you by looks and excesses worthy of the fate of Sodom? What ferocious beasts have we let loose to devour the bodies of the saints, as some of these inhuman beings have done in our regard for no other crime than that of refusing to accept their dogmas, and to pollute our souls with their sacrilegious communions which we fly from as from the poison of a serpent, or for having given burial to persons whose bodies had been respected by the very beasts themselves? Is this a crime that merited to be punished in a theatre and by beasts? What bishops' bodies already weakened by old age have we torn with iron hooks, in presence of their disciples who were powerless to assist them except by their tears? Who, I ask, are these prelates who have been suspended with Christ, who have gained the victory by their constancy in their torments, who have watered their people with their precious blood and who, in fine, have been condemned to death in order to be buried and glorified with Jesus Christ whose victory still continues in the world, in the death and immolation of his victims? Who are those priests that fire and water, two contrary and incompatible elements, separated and who were consumed by the flames with their vessels? And in order not to enter into a detail of all the evils which we have endured, who are those that the prefects themselves have accused of cruelty though they themselves were the ministers thereof?"

The excesses complained of by St. Gregory were committed in almost all the provinces subject to Valens' rule. The greater number of the bishops were driven from their sees and replaced by Arians. There was one, however, whose

firmness and influence were too much even for Valens. This was Basil, of Cæsarea in Cappadocia. Every effort was made to bring him over to Arianism, but in vain, for after every thing had been tried—threats, promises, flattery—Modestus, to whom this business had been intrusted, sought the emperor, and said: "We have been conquered by him who governs this Church. He is a man above menaces, invincible against all discourses, unshaken by every art of persuasion. One may try to overcome those who have less courage than he; but as for him, he must be banished by open violence for he cannot be made to yield to threats." Valens could not but admire such fortitude; he allowed him to remain in possession of his see. The saint's difficulties, however, were far from being at an end: the Arian party were still as opposed to him as ever, and would have succeeded in driving him into banishment only for the special intervention of divine providence in his regard. That was manifested in this way. Valentinian Galatus, the youthful son of Valens, being attacked with a violent fever was in imminent danger of death. All hope of his recovery was abandoned by the attending physicians, and nothing, it was acknowledged, could save him but the divine interposition. His mother was troubled with strange and frightful dreams, all of which she interpreted as a mark of the divine displeasure on account of the treatment to which the Church was subjected. Borne down by grief at the condition of his beloved son, and believing in the sanctity of Basil, Valens summoned that prelate to his presence, and besought him to do something for the child. "I promise his cure," said the saint, "if you will have him baptized in the orthodox faith." The emperor agreed and the child was restored. Valens, however, refused to keep his promise, but had just reason to regret his infidelity, for th child shortly after relapsing into his former sickness, died.

The Arians were still as opposed to Basil as ever; they pressed the emperor to put him out of the way: nothing short of his death would satisfy some. He was the great obstacle in their way. As long as he lived they could not make any progress. The emperor, however, would not come into their view on so serious a matter; culpable as his conduct had been, he was unwilling to stain his hands with the blood of Basil. On the other hand, he had not firmness enough to resist the pressing solicitations of his party, and, as a compromise, consented to banish the holy prelate. But divine providence again interposed, and came to the saint's aid. His presence in those troublesome times was too necessary for the Church of God. Hence when the emperor attempted to affix his signature to the document of banishment, the pen was broken, by an invisible power, in his hand; a second time he tried, but with like effect, as also a third time. Persevering still in his iniquitous purpose a convulsive trembling seized his hand, and then, more from fear than from motives of humanity or a pious submission to the divine will, he desisted from his evil design, tore the decree of banishment, and left Basil in quiet possession of his see. The emperor, however, did not profit by this to investigate into the truth of the doctrine preached by the saint, but continued in his heretical notions. He had, however, an exalted idea of Basil's eminent sanctity, for when his minister Modestus fell ill, it was to Basil the emperor applied to obtain from the Almighty his cure, which in effect he miraculously did.

These manifest evidences of the divine favor and protection of heaven, it might be supposed, would have saved the holy bishop of Cæsarea from all further annoyance; but it was not so. An occurrence then happened which only for the attachment and zeal of his flock would have terminated in his death. The right of sanctuary was com-

mon at that period, and those availing themselves of it were for the time being beyond the reach of the law. It happened that an officer of justice, of the province of Pontus, attempted to constrain a noble Christian lady to accept him in marriage. Not relishing the alliance she fled for protection to Basil's church. The saint refused to place her in the hands of the authorities, and for this was about being put to death, when the Christian inhabitants of Cæsarea, learning of the affair, became intensely excited and, arming themselves with all manner of weapons, rushed to the judgment seat and rescued the saint. Valens on his part was equally embittered against the faithful and continued to exercise upon them the greatest atrocities. Being then at Antioch, he prevented the Catholics from assembling for divine worship within the walls of the city. Nothing discouraged, they repaired regularly to the country where at the foot of a mountain, in a cavern formed by nature, they continued celebrating the divine mysteries. But even there they were not suffered to assemble in peace; their zeal and fervor drew upon them the anger of the tyrant who despatched soldiers to disperse their assemblies. Banished thence, they were wont to meet on the banks of the Orontes where several of them were by the orders of the emperor arrested and tormented, some being drowned in the river.

What happened in Antioch was repeated in the whole country at large. The Catholics were every-where driven from their churches and prohibited assembling for divine worship: their bishops were sent into exile and heretics placed in their stead. Even in banishment they were not freed from the emperor's anger: for wherever their eminent virtues drew to them the minds of the people and enabled them to work the conversion of the idolatrous, Valens made them feel the weight of his authority. Thus St.

Barsabas bishop of Edessa, who was banished to an island on the coast of Phœnicia and subsequently to Xyrinquus in Egypt, was finally shut up in the castle of Philo at the extremity of the empire, in consequence of the numerous conversions he was making.

The readiness with which the Catholics suffered was the greatest obstacle to the emperor's designs. On one occasion finding the faithful assembled in numbers for the purpose of divine worship, he fell into a violent rage, and smiting his officer Modestus in the face, commanded him to prevent such occurrences in the future, and to disperse them if necessary at the point of the bayonet. Modestus, desirous of saving himself from so unpleasant a duty, as that of offering violence to the faithful when engaged in the discharge of their religious obligations, secretly acquainted the Christians of the emperor's orders. But great was his surprise when on hastening to the spot on the following day, he found the Catholics assembled as usual and free from all sense of alarm. On the way, too, he came up with a woman who was hastening with her child in the same direction, and upon enquiring from her whither she was going, received in answer the following reply: "I am going to the assembly of the faithful, having learned that they are going to be killed. I am hastening to join them with my little son in order that we might have the happiness of receiving the crown of martyrdom." This was more than Modestus had expected, he saw in it the disposition of all, and so hastening to the emperor, he begged him to leave them in peace or to order their general slaughter. The former he thought better to do as far as the laity were concerned, but the clergy he ordered to be arrested and banished in case of a refusal to communicate with the Arian bishop. In accordance with this order, eighty religious were arrested and exiled into Thrace.

Their removal, however, was more of a triumph than a defeat, for every-where along the route, the faithful turned out in their honor, and received them with enthusiasm and affection, manifesting towards them the highest admiration and beseeching their prayers. This was more than Valens could endure, and so in order to deprive them of this glory he ordered them separated, and one body to be conducted into Arabia and the Thebais, and the other into Thrace, while to render the separation more painful, those related by blood were to be placed in separate divisions.

The excesses that Valens in quality of emperor was guilty of towards the faithful in general and the clergy in particular, similar did the heretical intruders perpetrate in a minor way in the localities over which they were placed. Thus Lucius of Samosata, unlawful successor of Eusebius, banished into exile the principal clergy of the place. In the whole East there remained now only two great champions of the faith: these were Basil and Athanasius. The latter God called to himself at this date after an almost continual battle against the enemies of the faith for six and forty years. His death became the signal for a new persecution of the Church of Alexandria. Palladius who was then governor of the province and a pagan, with the view of courting the favor of Valens, assembled the Jews and the pagans, and at their head seized upon the Catholic cathedral, polluted most shamefully the sacred edifice, and massacred several of the faithful. The consecrated virgins that fell into their hands they divested of their garments and dragged naked in mockery and contempt through the streets, while a youthful debauchee, clad as a female, ascended the pulpit and harangued the multitude, advocating intemperance, lust, adultery and sodomy!

The Arians, meantime, were not inactive in forwarding

their interest. They informed the emperor, who was then at Antioch, of the death of Athanasius, and he in compliance with their desires, appointed to the vacant see a certain Lucius. This man was installed under the protectection of a military guard, and from the moment he found himself vested with authority he ceased not to persecute the faithful. One of his first acts was to seize upon the churches: but the faithful resisting, he construed their opposition into a crime, particularly on the part of the clergy, and thus furnished with a plea for severity treated the Catholics as if they had been the common enemies of the country. To save themselves from Lucius's fury, the orthodox faithful fled in numbers from the city: several were arrested, loaded with chains, cast into prison and made to endure the most horrible torments. Some had their sides torn with iron hooks and their backs gashed with leathern thongs, while others were burned by the application of lighted torches, and tortured to such an extent that death would be incomparably preferable to such suffering. No age or condition was exempt from the common fury. Infants of the tenderest years as well as old men of the ripest age became alike the victims of the popular rage. Bishops, priests and laity suffered without any exception: some were maimed, some burned and some beheaded. Their properties, Lucius and his party confiscated to their own use. Of those who thus suffered in person and property at that time were nineteen ecclesiastics, arrested on the entrance of Lucius into the city. Every means were tried to extract from them a denial of their holy faith, They were imprisoned, flogged, and tortured in divers manners, but all in vain. In fine, seeing that their constancy could not be overcome, they were banished to Heliopolis in Phœnicia. The day of their departure was one ever memorable in the annals of the Alexandrian Church. The faithful

unable to render them assistance, assembled in great numbers and made the streets resound with their lamentations. But even this poor tribute they were not permitted to offer: it was construed into a crime and three and twenty of the sympathizers were accordingly arrested and condemned to serve, some in the copper mines of Phenus, and some in the marble quarries of Propontidus. The very infants were not secure from the fury of the Arians: their faith was their crime and, in punishment thereof, several were slain and their bodies left to be devoured by the beasts. Valens was a party to all this, for when a body of ecclesiastics at the risk of their lives represented the actual state of affairs to his majesty, the only result of their efforts was their banishment into Pontus.

Matters now assumed a more formidable aspect; the persecution which hitherto was local became general. The governor of Egypt received at this date instructions from the emperor to drive from Alexandria and the entire province all who adhered to the doctrine of Nice. The force requisite for this was to be put at the disposition of Lucius, the intruder into the see of Athanasius. Armed by this authority and in company with the Count Magnus, Lucius at the head of his troops traversed Egypt in every direction banishing every-where those of the clergy who refused compliance with his will. All the Catholic bishops were thus driven from their sees and sent into exile, together with great numbers of the clergy. Nor was this sufficient to satisfy the animosity of the persecutor. He next turned his attention to the solitaries of the desert and at the head of a considerable number of troops proceeded to drive them from their retreat or to compel them to apostatize. Unable to alter the faith of these holy servants of God, he banished their abbots into a desolate isle inhabited solely by pagans. In acting thus, however, he was only

promoting unconsciously the glory of God and the honor of the Catholic faith, for, upon the arrival of these holy men, the whole isle was quickly converted to the true faith. Even before they landed their power was felt and acknowledged by the demons. For while yet on board the daughter of the chief priest of the place possessed by an evil spirit came rushing in the direction of the exiles, crying out in a loud, piteous voice: "O Servants of Jesus Christ, you, who drive us from all places, towns, villages and deserts, we thought ourselves free from your power in this little isle. It is our ancient habitation; we injure no one here and we are unknown. But if you wish to drive us hence, it is in your power, we will retire." Having spoken thus, the demons cast the girl on the ground and left her. This being witnessed by a great number of pagans, had a great effect on the people and led to their conversion. News hereof reaching Alexandria, the faithful made use it to taunt Lucius with his cruelty and injustice, so that, fearing a commotion he granted permission to the exiles to return to their solitude.

A circumstance occurred at this time, which was of no small importance to the faithful. The Saracens, having made a descent upon the eastern portion of the empire, ravaged several provinces and threatened to overrun the remainder. But in this they were checked by the designs of divine providence. A holy man of their nation, Moses by name, being then renowned for sanctity and miracles, Maria, queen of the Saracens, proposed to the Romans to make peace with that power on the condition of Moses being made bishop of Alexandria. A more favorable proposition could not be expected; the proposal was accepted and a cessation of hostilities followed.

Valens, the heretical emperor of the East, was not the sole persecutor of the Church at this period. The children

of God suffered at the same time from the pagan Goths and their kinsmen. Many of these were Christians, but the chiefs were, for the most part if not exclusively, unbelievers. In 370 Athanaric, king of the Visigoths, manifested a fierce spirit of hostility against the faithful. Endeavoring to destroy every vestige of Christianity in his dominions, he ordered the principal idols of the nation to be borne triumphantly in a chariot through the land, with the view of being adored under pain of being burned alive. The order being disregarded, numbers were burned, some in their dwellings and others before the altars in the temples of God, where they had hastened for refuge. Of those who suffered for the faith at that epoch, but in a different manner, was St. Sabas, a Goth by birth. The persecution in which this saint received the crown of martyrdom, commenced by a demand being made upon all to eat of the viands offered to the idols. Some, unwilling to commit the sin of apostasy, and yet not wishing to die, endeavored to save themselves by a very questionable device. They had substituted for the impure offerings, meats that had not been presented to the idols. Sabas, learning of this, not only refused to taste of such food but even publicly denounced the partakers as apostates. His zeal was attended with the happiest consequences and prevented many from becoming victims to the delusion. The lukewarm and indifferent, however, found his conduct too embarrassing; they regarded him as too scrupulous, and, in consequence drove him out of the place. The baseness and weakness of these Christians now carried them to greater extremes; their conduct was a realization of the divine words "abyssus abyssum invocat," for forgetting their duty to God, upon an examination being made as to their numbers, some were ready to allow their pagan relatives to swear that there was not an individual Christian in the locality. Sabas again coming forward reproached the prevaricators and boldly

forbade them answering for him, declaring that he was a Christian. The adjuration, however, was made in behalf of the others with the single exception in the formulary, that whereas before it declared that there was not a single Christian inhabitant in the place, it now set forth that there was only one, meaning Sabas. The saint, in consequence, being summoned before the royal commissioner to answer for himself, boldly professed his faith, but yet was not punished with death, the judge dismissing him on the ground of being a person of no account. The time of Easter was now drawing near. Sabas resolved to betake himself to another town to celebrate the divine mysteries. On the way he encountered a person of venerable aspect, who told him to return, for that the person he sought was not at the place whither he was proceeding. Having disregarded this information and still proceeding on his journey, he was arrested by a fall of snow which completely blockaded his passage though it was not the season of the year for such an occurrence to happen. Thus prevented from advancing, and recognizing the divine will in the occurrence, he returned to the city, found the person spoken of by the stranger and celebrated with him the paschal solemnity. Three days later, a son of a chief of a neighboring principality entered, at the head of a number of brigands, the town where he was and seized upon the saint and his companions. Having securely bound him, they dragged him naked over burning coals, beating him continually at the same time with the utmost rage and violence. But on the following day this great servant of God was able to challenge his enemies to find a single mark upon his body, God having meantime miraculously healed all his wounds. But this was insufficient to convert his tormentors: they still continued to exercise upon him their rage and amongst other torments had him suspended from a pole, his hands being tied behind his

back. While in this painful position, the tempters came offering him meat that had been presented to idols and assuring him that his acceptance of it would secure to him his life. Speaking for himself and companions, he replied to his tormentors thus: "These meats are as impure as he who sent them." After this the saint was cast into a river and drowned.

It was thus Athanaric persecuted the faithful: finding that his severity and cruelty could not withdraw them from their holy religion he ordered all to quit his dominions. Many embraced this permission and retired to the Roman territory, but several remained to bear testimony to the truths of their holy faith.

The eastern Christians suffered at this time from other enemies: these were the Arabs and the Ethiopians. The former in their incursions upon the Roman territory massacred forty hermits of Mount Sinai; and the latter, several of the same class under similar circumstances.

An event occured at this date, 375, which was a presage of greater suffering to the Christians: that was the death of Valentinian. His presence exercised hitherto a certain though not very important restraint on the conduct of his brother Valens. His remonstrances and displeasure being now no longer to be feared, Valens felt himself at liberty to exercise his utmost cruelty against the faithful. The persecution accordingly burst forth with renewed vigor and increased intensity all over the East. The emperor himself acted as judge in deciding the cases of the Catholics; but this was only a mock tribunal, for while he received all manner of accusations against the faithful he refused to accord the right of repelling the charges made against them. Not contented with driving the Catholic bishops every-where from their sees and replacing them by Arians, Valens now issued his famous ordinance subjecting the monks to military service and in case of refusal to criminal prosecution and pun-

ishment. The case turned out as he desired: the monks refused to obey so iniquitous an ordinance: they had consecrated their lives to God and they were not now, many of them at the end of their days, going to enter the ranks of the military. These holy and venerable men were accordingly sedulously sought for in every quarter; dragged from their quiet retreats, and after being subjected to every manner of insult, cast into prison or slain in their dwellings. At the same time it was prohibited to all under the severest penalty to adopt the monastic habit. While Valens was thus persecuting the faithful, Sapor, king of Persia, was following a like course. To what extent that pagan monarch carried his hatred of the true faith it would be impossible to say, but from the Acts of St. Bedune and his seven companions, we know that the Christians were sorely afflicted by him. The time had now come when it pleased the Almighty to punish these enemies of his holy religion. In the year 376, the Goths, who had made numerous conquests in the East, turned their arms against the western portion of the empire. Valens was necessitated to take the field against them. As he left Constantinople for that purpose, a hermit accosted him saying, "Restore the churches to those who hold the faith of Nice, from whom you have taken them, and you will return victorious." The only attention he paid to this was to order the religious to be apprehended and kept in prison till his return, when he would be at liberty to order his punishment. But that time never came. A battle was fought near Adrianople in which Valens was mortally wounded and his army completely overthrown. The emperor was carried to a little hut, to which his enemies set fire; and thus perished, being burned alive, after having been ingloriously defeated in war, another of the great persecutors of the Church of Christ.

Valens was succeeded by his nephew, Gratian, who was then in his 19th year. Being of a more liberal and enlightened disposition than his uncle, he abstained from persecuting those who differed from him in matters of faith: he even enacted a law granting liberty of conscience to all excepting the Manichæans, the Plotinians and the Eunomians. The reason he denied to these the liberty granted to others, would seem to be on account of the very objectionable nature of their creed and their formidable character as a body of religious enthusiasts.* The Catholic clergy who had been exiled during the reign of Valens were now recalled and put in possession of their respectives churches. This was in the highest manner beneficial to religion, for at that date, with the exception of Jerusalem, all the eastern sees were in the hands of the Arians.† The moderation displayed by the lawful occupants upon their return was as creditable to them as their faith had been edifying in preferring banishment to apostasy. For, consulting more for the interests of religion and the public tranquillity than their own personal advantage, they were willing to leave to the intruders the posts that they occupied on condition of their accepting the orthodox or Nicene creed. Their generous and magnanimous offer was not always accepted in the spirit it was made, but still the motive that prompted it was not entirely bereft of important beneficial results, the Arian laity being deeply impressed by the generous offer and uniting in consequence with the Catholics.

Six months had now elapsed since Gratian came to the throne, when he found that the weight of authority was too great for him to bear. Accordingly he looked around him for one whom he could, with safety to himself and advantage to the nation, associate as colleague in the

* St. Liguori, Hist. of Heresies. † Sozomen, p. 324.

government of the empire. Natural affection and court intrigue were sure at such a moment to make themselves felt; but Gratian was superior to the former and determined not to be the victim of the latter. Already he had committed a grievous mistake at the advice of his unprincipled jealous advisers; on vain and groundless reports he had the greatest captain of the age, Theodosius, the pacificator of Britain and conqueror of Africa, ignominiously beheaded at Carthage. No one in the popular estimation could be accordingly more unlikely to be thought of for the exalted position than the son of the murdered general. But Gratian knowing the admirable qualities of the young Theodosius and desirous at the same time of making amends, as far as was in his power, for the injury done him in slaying his father, offered him the position of colleague. It was accepted and Theodosius was in consequence raised to the dignity of Augustus, at Sirmich, on the 19th of January, 379. He received for his portion in the government of the empire, the eastern provinces. The first few months of his reign were occupied in contests with the Goths, whom when he had subdued, he proceeded to Thessalonica. There he fell ill and was baptized by the bishop of the place, Ascholius.* On arriving at Constantinople, whither he proceeded on leaving Thessalonica, he was much grieved at finding the capital distracted by a number of conflicting sects. To remedy this unpleasant state of affairs he issued his famous law, "Cunctos populos," by which he called upon all to embrace and practice the Roman creed. The document is as follows: "The emperors Gratian, Valentinian, and Theodosius Augustus, to the people and city of Constantinople. —We desire that all our subjects shall follow the religion which the apostle, St. Peter, taught the Romans, which is

* Sozomen, p. 326.

still preserved in their city, and which is the religion of pope Damasus and of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a saintly and apostolic man, so that according to the teaching of the Apostles and the doctrine of the Evangelists, we may believe in the one sole divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, under one majesty and one holy Trinity. We wish that those who observe this law shall assume the name of Catholics and that all others whom we regard as senseless shall bear the opprobrious name of heretics. The meeting places of these latter shall not be known as churches, and as regards their punishment we refer it in the first instance to the divine vengeance and then to our pleasure as heaven shall inspire us.—Given at Thessalonica, the third of the calends of March, under the fifth consulate of Gratian and the first of Theodosius, that is to say the 28th of February, 380."

The heretics now saw the danger that threatened them. They could readily read in the emperor's words the consequences that an opposition to his will would entail upon them. Hitherto the Gratian enactment of which we have spoken above and which required the Catholic clergy to be put in possession of their respective churches, had remained partly in abeyance. Especially at Constantinople where the Arian party was all powerful, it did not receive a strict application. The heretics still continued to hold possession of the churches, and even maltreated the rightful bishop, St. Gregory Nazianzen, who was at that time appointed to that see. But Theodosius' presence in the capital remedied these evils and the usurpers found themselves necessitated to hand over to the rightful owners the churches of which they had been unjustly dispossessed during the iniquitous reign of Valens. Enraged at seeing themselves thus stripped of their possessions and branded as heretics by the law, "Cunctos

populos," the hatred of the Arians for the orthodox faithful now knew no bounds and they sought to revenge themselves for the treatment they received by assassinating the Catholic archbishop. To this end a young man was engaged to slay St. Gregory; but the hand of God arrested the murderer. Touched by remorse the would-be assassin repented of his horrible resolve and hastening to the palace of the prelate cast himself at the feet of the archbishop and demanded forgiveness. "May God preserve you," said the saint: "I must treat you kindly as the Lord has treated me. Endeavor to render yourself worthy of God and of me."

In the following year, 381, was held what has since been known in history as the council of Constantinople. It was not œcumenical, though a great number of bishops took part in its deliberations. It was terminated on the 9th of July, and on the 30th of the same month the emperor, in compliance with the desire of the fathers issued his famous decree ordering the immediate restoration of the places of divine worship to the bishops in communion with Rome. He also forbade the sectaries holding their meetings within the towns; a month latter the emperor's first decree was supplemented by another declaring confiscated the places where the heretics may happen to assemble.

It was at this period that the sovereign authority of the western provinces of the empire passed from the hands of Gratian to those of Maximus. The latter who commanded in Britain, revolted against his legitimate sovereign, and, invading Gaul at the head of a powerful army, obtained possession of his imperial master, and had him executed. Both Theodosius and Maximus being ardent Catholics, the peace of the Church would be now complete, but for the evil dispositions of Justina, the mother of the youthful Valentinian. This artful woman having embraced the Arian

doctrine, made every effort to sustain the fast-failing cause of her co-sectaries. Her antipathy was especially directed against Ambrose, bishop of Milan, on account of his successful endeavors in opposing her efforts. His refusal to consign, at her request, one of the churches subject to his authority to the use of the heretics, she regarded as a grievous crime. When summoned to account for his refusal, the great prelate replied: "If I were asked for what belonged to myself, my land or my money, I should not refuse, though all I have belongs to the poor; but divine things are not at the emperor's disposal. If my patrimony be sought, let it be taken; if it be my body that is demanded, I shall yield it up. Do you desire to put me in chains and to conduct me to death? I am delighted; I shall not surround myself by my people to defend myself. I shall not embrace the altar, clinging to life, for I prefer to be immolated thereon." The empress now saw there was no way of succeeding in her designs but by engaging her son to issue a decree favorable to the heretics. He did so, and the document conferred upon the Arians the privilege of assembling for the purpose of divine worship wherever they pleased. Not contented with this, the empress' party endeavored to carry their triumph still further. To this end they arraigned Ambrose for his refusal in not complying with the empress' demand, but he refused to be tried before a lay tribunal. The feeling in his favor being so strong the emperor thought it better not to insist upon the trial. Meantime the political aspect of affairs was undergoing an important change. Maximus, of whom we have spoken above as having invaded Gaul at the head of a powerful army and having usurped the imperial authority, taking advantage now of the dissentions existing between Valentinian and the Catholics, invaded northern Italy and made himself master of a large portion of the country.

Valentinian was unable to check his progress, and Theodosius was accordingly necessitated to quit his eastern provinces for this purpose. Success attended his efforts; the usurper was overcome in Pannonia, and put to death in Aquileia, A. D. 388. Valentinian was thus put in quiet possession again, of the western part of the empire, but his incapacity led to his death. He was strangled by one of his generals, who placed a creature of his own in his stead. For three years the new emperor, under the name of Eugenius, ruled in the West, but was finally overcome by Theodosius who united in his person the government of the whole Roman empire.

While the empress Justina and her Arian party were persecuting Ambrose at Milan, several of the faithful were martyred by the pagans at Alexandria. Their sufferings and death were occasioned by an act of imprudence on the part of the authorities. On removing the debris of an old temple of Bacchus, preparatory to the erection of a Christian place of worship, certain indecent and ridiculous figures were found. These the patriarch Theophilus had paraded through the streets, with the view of showing the absurdity of paganism; but, as might be expected, it served only to arouse the anger and violence of the unbelievers and led finally to bloodshed. For the pagans, thinking themselves outraged in their most sacred feelings, fell upon the processionists and massacred them without mercy. Theodosius, being made acquainted with the occurrence, showed the virtuous Christian sentiments with which he was imbued by pardoning the guilty. But to show his horror for paganism, he commanded the destruction of the temples of Alexandria and vicinity. The execution of this order was not of the easiest kind. The pagans, as may be expected, resisted wherever their numbers were considerable, and on one occasion showed the intensity of their

feelings by casting the Catholic bishop of the place into a blazing furnace, while the work of demolition was going on.

In a preceding chapter the reader was informed how the persecution in Persia was carried on by Sapor, so as to draw a remonstrance from Constantine. A partial cessation of the cruelties exercised, was the consequence; but the sword was not sheathed till the death of Sapor. The charges laid against the Christians were as futile as they were ludicrous; they were accused of not permitting the indiscriminate slaughter of animals, of interring the dead, and of teaching that reptiles were made by the Almighty, and not by the demons.* By these and their supposed hostility to the state, the antipathy of the pagan inhabitants was aroused against them and a persecution commenced which carried off a large number thereof. The entire number that were martyred during the three persecutions of Sapor are estimated at 200,000.†

* See Acts of Martyrs, St. Acepsimus. † Belouino.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THEODOSIUS DIES—THE CHURCH ENJOYS PEACE FOR A FEW YEARS—THE VANDALS AND ALANS POUR DOWN UPON THE EMPIRE AND PERSECUTE THE FAITHFUL—THEY PASS FROM GAUL INTO SPAIN—PERSECUTION IN PERSIA UNDER YEZDEJERD—GREAT SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRISTIANS—THE PEOPLE FLY FROM THE COUNTRY IN THOUSANDS—GUARDS STATIONED ON THE FRONTIERS TO PREVENT THE CHRISTIANS ABANDONING THE COUNTRY—PEACE IN AFRICA—THE CHRISTIANS FALL INTO A GREAT STATE OF DEPRAVITY—THEY ARE TERRIBLY PUNISHED BY HEAVEN—GENSERIC THE INSTRUMENT USED BY GOD FOR THIS PURPOSE—PERSECUTION IN ARMENIA—EDICT REQUIRING ALL THE CHRISTIANS TO BECOME PAGANS OR TO WORSHIP THE SUN.

Theodosius died on the 17th of January 395. For the next ten years the Church was free from any local or general persecution, if we except that endured by St. Chrysostom and the Catholics of Constantinople at the hands of Eudoxia and her adherents. In 406 the Vandals and the Alans passed the Rhine and entered Gaul; their advance was the herald of destruction. Every-where, whithersoever they directed their course, churches were desecrated and destroyed, virgins and matrons outraged, bishops led captive, and priests and people butchered without mercy, their bodies being left to rot in the streets and on the highways. At Metz several thousands of the faithful together with their bishop were slain in cold blood in the church where they had taken refuge. At Strasburg, Spires, Rheims, Tournay, Arras and Amiens, like deeds of blood were perpetrated and continued, until the devastating tide of war had swept over the greater part of the seventeen provinces into which the country was divided.

From Gaul the barbarians passed into Spain and there were repeated the same excesses that were perpetrated in the former country. The greater part of the Catholics were tortured and put to death in divers manners.* Whilst the Vandals and Alans were thus overrunning and destroying the fairest parts of Christendom, the Christians of Persia, of whose sufferings we have already spoken, were in the enjoyment of a profound peace. They had then as king Yezdejerd I. who, though a pagan, showed himself most favorable to his Christians subjects and not unfrequently solicited the advice of some of the Catholic bishops. This happy state of affairs so beneficial to the best interests of religion might have continued but for the imprudent zeal of Abdas, bishop of the metropolis. This over-zealous prelate, in his eagerness to advance the interests of truth, set fire to a pagan temple and burned it to the ground. It was not in his power to have performed an act more detrimental to the cause he loved so well. The unprovoked burning of their temple, the pagans regarded as an unpardonable offense and made use of it to inflame the king against the Christians. His majesty was not insensible to the offense and, as a reparation for the outrage, commanded the bishop to reconstruct the ruined edifice. Abdas refused, the king was inexorable, and from a friend became a foe. In his wrath he ordered the bishop to be slain, the churches to be demolished, and the Christians every-where to be put to the sword. Persia was accordingly once more drenched in the blood of her best and most faithful children. The scenes witnessed during Sapor's tyrannous rule were again repeated and with tenfold greater atrocity. Every imaginable torment that the mind could suggest was employed to torture the faithful. Modes of sufferings, before unheard of, were now brought into use.

* See Gregory of Tours.

The skin was torn from the hands of some, and from the backs and countenances of others. It was a most shocking and heart-rending sight to see numbers of persons of all classes and conditions of life thus half flayed alive. Better a thousand times had they been executed at once than left to die so painful and protracted a death; but to prolong their sufferings was the object of the cruel order. Others again were tied hands and feet and cast into great pits dug on purpose where had been congregated a great number of half famished rats. These urged by hunger and their natural ferocity, seized their living victims and gnawed them to death. Other numerous inventions were employed, according to Theodoret, for a like purpose.

The author of these cruel deeds was soon summoned before his Maker to answer for his conduct; but his death did not put an end to the persecution. On the contrary, it became more violent under his son and successor, Varanes V. Amongst the most illustrious who died for the faith under this tyrant were Saints Mabarsapor and James. The first was a man of noble extraction. By order of the king he was cast into a frightful, fetid dungeon with the hope that thus his constancy might be overcome without proceeding to severer measures. But in this, his tormentors miscalculated, for, after enduring a tedious imprisonment, his resolution was as unshaken as ever. The long confinement and ill-treatment, however, had made considerable ravages on his otherwise robust frame, so that when summoned to trial he was hardly recognizable by his judge. Upon refusing to comply with the king's order of abjuring his faith, he was sentenced to be enclosed in a subterranean cavern, the mouth of which was ordered closed and guarded till death should claim its victim. There he remained for over a month till the king ordered the place opened. On entering the cave, great was the surprise of the pagans at

finding the venerable man on his knees, encompassed by a brilliant light which illumined the entire surroundings. The spirit, indeed, had flown; he was dead; but the preternatural light was an attestation on the part of the Almighty of the sanctity of his servant and the truth of the cause he maintained.

Far more cruel was the death of his companion, James. In the designs of divine providence it served the double purpose of sustaining the cause of truth and of atoning for his former grievous scandal. Being of noble birth and born in the capital, he was at an early period employed in the court of his sovereign. His many admirable qualities attracted to him the king's special attention and obtained for him many marks of his monarch's favor. It had been better for him had it been otherwise; for it would have saved him from the commission of a crime which he had just reason afterwards to bitterly lament. The attention shown him by his royal master so influenced his mind that in a moment of weakness, as an expression of gratitude to his benefactor, he abandoned his faith and offered adoration to the sun. The sudden death of the king a few days after, aided by the earnest entreaties of his afflicted parents, caused him to re-enter into himself and to repent of his crime. The new monarch was greatly afflicted at James' recantation and tried every persuasion, but in vain, to retain him as a member of the national religion. Enraged at so much obstinacy, the king finally summoned a council to deliberate upon the mode of torture to which he should be subjected. The one approved of as being the most painful was to deprive the victim of life by dismembering him consecutively, till the vital parts had been reached. Thus the fingers and toes were to be removed, one by one, then the hands and feet, and so on, till nothing but the trunk remained. When this sentence was made known it caused a great sensation in the

capital. The people every-where were moved with commiseration for the fate of the youthful noble. Numbers of Christians prostrated themselves before him, as he was being led to execution, pouring out their prayers to God for a victory in his case. Nor were these supplications unheard, for James remained throughout as firm as he had been weak before. Arrived at the place of execution, the martyr solicited and obtained a few moments to commune with his God. Then falling upon his knees, he poured forth his soul in these words: "Hear and accept, O Lord, the prayers of your humble servant, James: give him courage, look propitiously upon him in this supreme moment. Let the mark of your goodness shine forth in me, in order that I may become an example for those who love you and who suffer persecution for your adorable name, so that when I shall have conquered by the aid of your grace, and received the crown with your elect who have been already crowned, those who hate me may be confounded, and may see that you have aided and consoled me."

The work of butchery was then commenced. Bit by bit and joint by joint the martyr's body was hewn away, until nought remained but the bleeding, half-lifeless, trunk. At this stage, while the sword was already in the executioner's hand to strike off the saint's head, James poured forth this prayer to his God: "O Lord God of mercy, hear, I beseech Thee, my prayer and receive my supplication. Behold me, O Lord, deprived of all my members. No longer have I fingers to make the sign of the cross in prayer, nor hands to extend in supplication. My feet and my hands have been removed and I am before thee as a house overturned, with nothing but the foundation remaining. I pray Thee, O Lord, to liberate my soul from its prison, that I may confess your holy name," etc. Another moment, and the head of the martyr was

rolling on the ground: the executioner had done his work and another name was added to the long list of those who had suffered in the cause of divine truth.

The Christians were prevented removing the martyr's remains, but under the cover of night they were enabled to effect this purpose, when, having gathered all the disjointed members to the number of twenty-three, they placed them together with the trunk in a casket prepared for the purpose and religiously interred them.

Another eminent soldier of Christ, who laid down his life at this time for the cause of truth, was Benjamin. His punishment consisted of sharp-pointed reeds being thrust under his nails, into the soles of his feet and other sensitive parts of his body. But these failing to procure the desired result, he was impaled at the king's command. Such horrible cruelty, exercised against the Christians in general, began quickly to be productive of a result which its author had never contemplated. That was the abandonment of the country by the faithful. Unable to endure the horrible torments to which they were constantly subjected, great numbers of the Christians began to withdraw within the Roman frontiers. Such proportions did this movement assume that it was found necessary in the interest of society to station guards on the borders to prevent the people from abandoning the empire. The orders, however, were not always strictly carried into effect, for the people frequently found means of avoiding them. The monarch was, accordingly, under the humiliating necessity of demanding an extradition of his own fugitive subjects from the Roman emperor. But the latter was not so insensible as to yield a ready compliance to his pagan brother's demand. He replied in terms becoming a great, humane and liberal ruler. "The empire," said Theodosius, "is always open to the innocent.

The only crime of these is that of religion, and the Roman emperors never had a more glorious title than that of defenders of the Christian faith. To take back the fugitives to Persia, it would be necessary to snatch them from his arms."

Upon receiving this answer the Persian monarch made certain reprisals, a course which necessitated the Roman emperor's equipping an army and invading Persia. In this war, Persia was signally humiliated, being obliged to accept a peace, one of the conditions of which was the toleration of the Christian religion. Thus was concluded one of the severest persecutions endured by the faithful up to that date.

The reader has been informed of how the Vandals, after overrunning Gaul, passed into Spain and perpetrated there excesses similar to those that marked their progress in the former country. The Church of Africa, of which Augustin was then a brilliant light, was at this time in the enjoyment of a profound peace. No enemy disturbed its tranquillity; under the firm and wise administration of Count Boniface, peace and order prevailed in every hamlet and town of the province. But this general repose, which should have tended so much to advance the interests of religion, became only the occasion of the people's spiritual ruin. Living in an enervating climate, without any enemy to oppose, and naturally effeminate in manners, the morality of the people sank to so low a condition that vice was openly paraded, and the most sacred engagement of marriage almost wholly neglected. What no other people had ever beheld, except, perhaps, the inhabitants of the ill-fated cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, was then to be seen in Carthage—men dressed in the garb and all the gay colors of harlots, shamefully parading the streets and making open profession of their horrible sodomatical calling. Almost

every street had its bagnio, and almost every house its harlot. Blasphemy, too, was a common vice of the time. In fact, the lives of the people were more pagan than Christian; they adored Astarte and Christ, betimes. Those who in the morning approached the most adorable Eucharist, in the evening offered sacrifice to Celesta.*

It is not to be wondered that such horrible depravity should have drawn down upon that people, the just anger of God; it would, indeed, be surprising, if it did not, for God does not tolerate forever. The instrument used by him for this purpose, was the cruel and heartless king of the Vandals, Genseric. Invited by Boniface, who aspired to the sovereignty of a part of the country, and furnished with vessels, the Vandal king soon found himself in Africa at the head of 50,000 men. His presence was the herald of a persecution greater than any the people of God had endured up to that time. For a century from that date, till conquered by Belisarius, in 534, that people exercised all manner of cruelties upon the Catholics. Their rage was particularly directed against the churches, the monasteries and cemeteries. The former they ordinarily burned to the ground, and when the fire had done its work, the walls were then overturned. Whenever the faithful, in any available position, offered a successful resistance, the barbarians usually reduced them to submission by slaying in cold blood a vast number of prisoners in the immediate vicinity, and by allowing their bodies to putrify, thus subdued by pestilence those who could not be overcome by arms. The bishops and priests, before being slain, were most horribly tortured to extort from them an avowal of their supposed wealth. To this end, their mouths were forced open and crammed with filth; others were made to swallow sea-water, vinegar and lees, till swollen beyond measure; while others

* Salvian apud Rohrbacher, vol. 7, p. 589.

again, had their foreheads and legs so tightened, that the cords broke in the act. An eye-witness bewailing these evils, thus expresses himself. Alluding to Augustine, he says: "We saw the churches deprived of their bishops and priests, the virgins and persons consecrated to God, dispersed and driven from their monasteries, and numbers of them slain in torments, or by the sword. . . . We witnessed the hymns and praises of God banished from the temples, and the churches themselves in numerous places destroyed; while those who betook themselves to the caverns and underground retreats, were for the most part slain, or starved to death. Several bishops and priests who escaped by flight, were in the greatest indigence and lived by alms."

After a short but successful campaign, the greater part of the country was in the hands of Genseric. Only three cities, Cirtle, Hippo and Carthage held out against him; but even these in turn, yielded to his authority. The last named, was taken by him in 438. It was a sad day for the Catholics when this occurred. Genseric immediately ordered the arrest of the bishop, Quodvultdeus, and a number of his clergy. These he embarked naked and destitute of all provisions on an unseaworthy vessel, which he ordered out of the harbor. His object was to destroy, without apparently incurring the odium, the men he so hated. But God came to the assistance of his servants, and preserved them from a watery grave. By the mercy of the Lord, the vessel was guided in safety and continued prosperously on her course, till she arrived at Naples, where the glorious confessors were hospitably received by the brethren, and furnished with all that their necessities required. Genseric, having thus banished the clergy, took possession of the Churches, some of which he retained for profane uses, but the greater number he handed over to his sectaries. The few clergy that still lingered in the city

and suburbs, as soon as their arrest could be effected, were driven like their brethren, into banishment. The hatred of the tyrant was not still appeased. As long as the faithful manifested any signs of their faith, he was not content. Hence, at this juncture, he ordered the interments to be made without any solemnity of hymns or chants. He even went farther, and empowered his co-religionists to seize upon the property of the Catholics, and to retain the lawful owners as slaves. This ordinance was most disastrous to the faithful, for while it exposed them to the danger of apostasy, it reduced them in numerous instances, where faith was stronger than worldly considerations, from a condition of affluence, to the extreme of poverty. Harder still, and more difficult to bear, was it to be deprived of the consolations of religion and necessitated to die without the administration of the last rites of the Church. In this deplorable state of affairs, a few of the ecclesiastics, who had escaped the vigilance of the authorities, were emboldened to approach the king and solicit permission to remain amongst their destitute brethren, to minister to their wants. The king's disposition may be judged from his answer: "I have resolved upon destroying your name and your nation, and you have the audacity to make such a demand." The petitioners were saved from being cast into the sea, by the kind exertion of some who had influence at court.

In execution of his evil designs Genseric launched forth, from time to time, his cruel edicts against the pastors and faithful of the Church. Driven from their sees, and fugitives in foreign lands, the bishops were compelled to pass a precarious existence, depending for their living upon the alms of strangers.

The feeble rule in the West of Valentinian III, at this epoch, 450, offered the Vandal king an opportunity of extending his conquests in that direction. At the invitation

of Eudoxia, wife of Palladius, Genseric invaded Italy, took Rome, and, during fourteen days, gave it up to the indiscriminate pillage of his troops. His taste for plunder was only increased hereby, and he accordingly extended his ravages as opportunity offered, all over the country, into Sardinia, Sicily and Greece.

The Church of Africa was now almost wholly destitute of chief pastors. Out of 164 bishops who had been there before the Vandals landed, only three remained; the others were either banished or executed. Even these three did not long remain to bless by their presence, and to sustain by their labors, the suffering faithful. One yielding to fear retired to Edessa, and the other two were driven into exile. Thus the whole country was left without a single chief pastor.

Genseric was not yet satisfied; it was not sufficient for his purpose that the country should be wholly deprived of its bishops, and in great part of its priests. As long as any vestige of the faith remained, and was practised by the people, he would not be content, his object being to destroy completely, the orthodox faith. He accordingly demanded of the remaining clergy to yield up to him the Sacred Scriptures and the articles necessary for the celebration of the divine mysteries. When this order was resisted his impious satellites gave it effect by seizing with their own hands the sacred objects, employing them for the profanest of uses, the altar linen being converted into shirts and underwear for the plunderers. But the man who was the chief in all this iniquitous work, soon became the object of heaven's vengeance, for he died in horrible agony, tearing his flesh like one afflicted with hydrophobia. Although the king showed himself thus hostile to the uttermost extent, against the members of the orthodox faith, the faithful nevertheless endeavored to practice their holy religion even at the

imminent peril of their lives. Thus in one locality, in order to celebrate the paschal solemnity, the Catholics took possession of and opened for that purpose one of their confiscated churches. The act was followed by bloodshed: it drew down upon them the anger of their enemies. For the Arians, having heard of what had been done, came in great numbers at the head of a band of troops, surrounded the sacred edifice, and slew before the altar several of the worshippers. More and more deplorable still were the excesses committed on other occasions, when, not confining their anger to the worshippers, they turned it against the very Redeemer himself, by casting upon the ground and trampling under foot the divine elements of the most adorable Sacrament.

During the time that Genseric and his Arian followers were persecuting the faithful in Africa, a new and in every manner a grievous persecution broke out in Armenia. Varanes, with whose hostility to the Christian faith the reader is already acquainted, died in 439. He was succeeded by his son Yezdejerd II. Almost from the beginning of his reign, this monarch showed himself the deadly enemy of the Christian name and cause. After overcoming the Roman troops who had obtained possession of Armenia, he set himself with ardor to the task of eradicating Christianity out of the country. His first efforts were not pre-eminently satisfactory, for, after having imprisoned and slain several, he had the mortification of seeing the faith not only as strong but even more prosperous. Where it was not practised before it was now being cherished and observed. To meet the emergency he summoned to his aid a council of the Magi and the military. Inspired by the demons they offered him the following advice: "Great king, the gods, who have given you the kingdom, do not require in return any terrestrial homage, for they stand not

in need of it. They desire, merely, that you labor to bring under one law and unto one religion all the people subject to your sceptre; you may then be assured that the Greeks shall not fail to become your co-religionists. Raise troops without delay, assemble a numerous army, march against the country of the Couchimes, conduct your warriors beyond Dafile and Balk, and abide on the frontier. When you have surrounded all the Christian troops with their chiefs, in these distant, inhospitable provinces, your will shall be accomplished. We have learned by the mysteries of magic that you shall return conqueror from that country and that the Greeks shall not then be able to escape the yoke of Persia. But the most important thing of all, O King, is to destroy completely and forever the Christian sect." This advice failed not to make a due impression on the king's mind: he accepted it in all its parts, and in consequence, issued the following edict: "To all the nations, free and tributary, that constitute my kingdom, health and good will!—On the reception of this edict, assemble immediately the cavalry and go await me in the country of Abar, where I shall join you, for we have determined to march to the East, and with the aid of the gods to conquer the kingdom of the Couchimes." This command was published in all the provinces of the empire, many of which were largely Catholic. From all sides the Christian troops hastened to obey their monarch's call, unconscious of the sinister designs that dictated the same. They were accompanied by their priests who bore with them the divine volumes of the Sacred Scriptures. Yezdejerd was rejoiced at the success of his plan, but he could not afford, for the moment, to slaughter his Christian troops; they were too necessary for him at the time. He had then to subdue the Couchimes or Huns. For two years he labored for this purpose, and it was not till the eleventh year of

his reign, or 450, that he triumphed over his adversary. Then at the height of his success and inflamed with pride, he showed the dispositions that he had previously entertained against the faithful. His first act was an order commanding the offering of sacrifice every-where throughout the kingdom, and a permission to the Magi to pillage the Christians. This was followed by an edict requiring all to conform to the Persian pagan worship. It was as imperative as it was impious: "Let all the nations and all the people, subject to my authority, cease immediately to follow their false religions. Let them return to the worship of the sun, and confess God in offering him sacrifices. Let them be ever ready to betake themselves whither the service of fire shall call them, and let them observe strictly the law of the Magi."

CHAPTER XXV.

YEZDEJERD PERSECUTES THE CHRISTIANS AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE MAGI—THE CHRISTIAN TROOPS CALLED UPON TO APOSTATIZE—A PROCLAMATION COMMANDING ALL ARMENIANS TO BECOME FIRE-WORSHIPPERS—THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS ANSWER THE DOCUMENT—SPIRITED CONDUCT OF THE NOBLES—THEIR SUBSEQUENT WEAKNESS—A PERSIAN ARMY SENT TO FORCE PAGANISM UPON THE ARMENIANS—THE CHRISTIANS MEET THE ENEMY AND ARE VICTORIOUS—THEY PETITION THE ROMAN EMPEROR THEODOSIUS FOR AID—HE PROMISES IT, BUT DIES—THE ARMENIANS ARE AGAIN ATTACKED AND ARE AGAIN VICTORIOUS—THE PERSIANS EMPLOY TREACHERY FOR THEIR DESTRUCTION—THE TRAITOR PUNISHED—ALL THE INCARCERATED CHRISTIANS ORDERED TO BE MASSACRED—MIRACULOUS OCCURRENCE.

The edict given in the concluding part of the last chapter was despatched to all parts of the kingdom, but circumstances at the moment did not permit it to be strictly enforced. On the following year Yezdejerd was successful in his campaign against the Huns. The Magi took occasion of this to advance their interests and to inflame the king against the Christian faith ; nothing short of the destruction of all form of worship contrary to theirs would content them. "The gods," said they to the monarch, "who have rendered you victorious demand not from you the goods of the earth, they merely desire that your religious zeal would destroy in your kingdom every worship that is not of Zoroaster." The king accepted the proffered council and acted sternly upon it. The Christian troops were accordingly confined within a narrow defile and called upon to apostatize or die. As a united body they refused : the king on the other hand was inflexible. He swore by his false gods that he should not spare of them an individual

unless they submitted to his orders. To terrify the general body he had four of the leading chiefs put to the torture and scourged in the presence of the troops. But this producing no other result than a general disaffection, which it was plain might lead to a general revolt, the cruel monarch found it necessary to have recourse to treachery. Under the semblance of being satisfied with the firmness they showed, he invited to his own table and received in the most affable manner, a large number of the Christian officers. He was in hope that the kindness he thus manifested towards them would be enough to overcome their religious belief and that thus they would be got to partake of the viands set before them but which had been consecrated to the sun. The trick did not succeed: the Christian officers becoming aware of the snare that was laid for them refused to touch the proffered meats. Yezdejerd was outwitted, but he did not manifest at the time the smallest resentment. Other viands were immediately provided and the banquet passed off most agreeably. As the guests, however, retired and passed through a corridor of the royal mansion those, who refused to taste the forbidden food, were arrested and cast into prison where they were subjected to the most shameful indignities. The troops in general were broken up into small bodies and sent without the necessary rations to fight against vastly superior numbers, the object being that they might perish either by the sword or by famine. The result was as anticipated; the far greater number perished in either one or other of these ways. The king's design was still unaccomplished; he had merely taken the outposts in this great war against his Christian subjects. Armenia was still Catholic; the conduct of her brave military children gave her only more courage and rendered her still more resolute. To succeed then in eradicating the faith from the breasts of the Armen-

ians, something more was necessary. Yezdejerd accordingly conceived another design. It was to disperse the clergy and by oppressive taxation to ruin the faithful, so that in their poverty and destitution they might be brought to accept the religion of the Magi. To carry out this evil design he sent as governor of Armenia one of his creatures, Tenchabouch. This artful official did not confine himself to imposing enormous and insupportable taxation; but played his role so effectively as to creat disunion amongst the faithful themselves. All the exactions and tyranny, however, that this man was capable of, was insufficient to effect the object sought. The Christians still clung with an undying tenacity to the faith of their fathers. The Persian authorities, now understanding the true disposition of the faithful, were convinced that if the Christians were to be destroyed it should be by the sword. The monarch had accordingly drawn up and published the following document: "Miher Nerseh, Vizier and Chief Almoner, of Jeran and Daniaran, to the Armenian people, health and good will! —Understand that all who do not follow the religion of Mazdiezn are deaf, blind and deceived by the demons. Every one who asserts that God created death, and that good and evil flow from the same source, is in error. The Christians especially are in error when they say that God is susceptible of jealousy and that he created death to punish man for having eaten a fig plucked from a forbidden tree. Could a like jealousy, which would be absurd in man, exist in God? He who affirms such a thing, is deaf, blind and deceived by the demons. But the Christians fall into a still greater error. They say that God who made heaven and earth is come amongst us, and that he was born of a certain woman named Mary whose, husband was called Joseph. Several have been deceived by this man who called himself God. If the Greeks, in consequence of their

profound ignorance and folly, follow this erroneous doctrine, and deprive themselves of the light of our perfect religion, they will suffer for it. But why do you, who are Persian subjects, fall into the same error? Why do you follow the same erroneous doctrine? Embrace then the religion of your master who is to answer for you before God.

"Don't put faith in your chiefs whom you call Nazarenes, because they are great liars and knaves. What they teach you by their words, they contradict by their works. To eat flesh meat, they say is not a sin, and nevertheless they won't eat it! To marry, they say is convenient, and yet they don't desire to think of those of the other sex! It is not sinful to justly enrich one's self, say these men, and still they cease not to preach and extol poverty. They laud misfortune and decry prosperity: they laugh at the idea of good fortune, and hold in contempt all kinds of glory. They like to clothe themselves in mean attire, and prefer common to precious things: they laud death and despise life. They do not esteem fecundity in man, but on the contrary praise sterility, so that if their disciples were to obey them they could not have any commerce with women, the result of which would be the end of the world. But I do not undertake to state in this document all their doctrine, for they affirm a number of things just as absurd as those I have just mentioned. They preach for instance that God was crucified by men, that he died, was buried, arose again and ascended into heaven. Now you yourselves can judge the value of such an unworthy doctrine. The demons, who are wicked, cannot be either taken nor tormented by men. How then could this be the case when there is question of the sovereign being? This is for you, Christians, a very shameful thing to affirm, and for us it is a doctrine as absurd as it is inconceivable. There only remains for you, then, O

Armenians, two things, either to answer this letter, article by article, or to hasten immediately to our sublime Porte, and to present yourselves before our high tribunal."

To this document the Armenian episcopate sent an able and spirited reply, to which the people and clergy in a general meeting subscribed their names, binding themselves by oath to maintain at the peril of their lives the doctrine contained therein. The document was read at the court in presence of the king and of all the high functionaries of the empire. It was pronounced by the prime minister and the chief of the Magi, to be both insolent and rebellious. They could not have uttered anything better calculated to inflame the king's mind. "I know," cried he in a rage, "that those are insolent persons who doubt our law and who run after false and deceptive doctrines. But I have resolved not to spare the most terrible punishments in the case of those who act so. I shall make no exception, not even of those high in rank, and I declare that I shall employ all the punishment and torture conceivable, till willingly or otherwise the pernicious law of the Christians is abandoned." The king was further stimulated in his iniquitous purpose by the minister's further prompting. "Order," said he, "and all that your majesty desires shall be accomplished immediately." Thereupon the monarch dictated upon the spot his royal pleasure—that all the Armenian nobles should hasten without delay to his presence. On the arrival of this order in Armenia, before setting out in obedience to the royal command, the princes bound themselves by oath in the presence of their bishop to remain faithful under every circumstance, even at the cost of their lives, to the Christian religion. It was Saturday of Holy Week when they arrived at the capital. On seeing them the king broke out into a violent rage and addressed them as follows: "I swear by the sun, the great god that illumines the world

and who by his heat vivifies all creatures, if to-morrow at the break of day each of you do not with me, at the first appearance of that wonderful star, kneel before him and confess his divinity, I shall make you undergo the most cruel torments, until, willing or otherwise, you shall fulfill my orders." To this the nobles answered as follows: "Permit us, O King, to answer briefly, and deign to listen to us calmly. We desire to remind you, in the first place, that Chabouk II. who was great grandfather of your grandfather, Yezdejerd I., was by the will of God put in possession of the kingdom of Armenia which then professed the same religion which we profess now. Our fathers and grandfathers have always remained faithful to Persia. They fulfilled all their duties with exactitude, and scrupulously acquitted themselves of every obligation regarding the military service. Oftentimes your royal ancestors loaded them with honors proportionate to their merit, and this state of things lasted till you received the throne as your inheritance. We, who are here before you, have rendered the same services, and perhaps we have done even more than our ancestors have done for yours. From the beginning, our church was free from imposts, but you have imposed them upon us nor have we rebelled against it, because we loved your dynasty. Whence then your anger? Tell us the cause of it. Is it that our religion prevents us from serving you."

To this firm but respectful address the king answered in a contemptuous and reproachful manner: "The royal treasury is defiled by the contributions levied on your country. Your gold is impure, and the services of which you boast are worse than useless, for you are misled and wander about in error, in consequence of not desiring to be instructed in our religion which is the truth. You despise the gods, you extinguish the fire, you infect the water, you inter the dead, you pollute the elements, and in acting thus you

please the evil genius Abrimen. What is still worse you rarely have connection with your wives, a matter that greatly rejoices the demons, and you obstinately refuse to observe the doctrine of the Magi. You are in my eyes wandering sheep dispersed over the face of the earth. This seriously afflicts my heart, and I fear that the gods will avenge themselves on me on your account. Now if you desire to live, to save your souls and to return to Armenia, loaded with honor, do to-morrow as I have prescribed." This harangue was as ineffectual as the former in shaking the resolution of these generous Christians. They answered in a firm and dignified manner, assuring his majesty that threats of punishment and torture were ineffectual to obtain from them a renunciation of their faith. The king was beside himself with rage, and abandoning all restraint, pronounced their condemnation as follows: "All you who are present, as well as all who are in my army, I will load with chains and will deport into Segastan through impracticable regions, where you shall perish on the way from burning winds and excessive heat. Those who remain shall be cast into frightful prisons. I will send into your country an innumerable army with elephants, and will transport your women and children into exile to Phonzistan and Tuzian. As regards your churches and oratories, where are the tombs of the martyrs, I shall raze them to the ground and reduce them to ashes. Should any one attempt to oppose me, I shall have him crushed under the feet of my elephants. This is what I have determined; consider it well, for all that I say shall be executed."

The course pursued by the nobles at this stage was little creditable to them as faithful servants of God: it was entirely out of harmony with their former resolute declarations of never abandoning the truth. At the instigation

of one of the courtiers, who was in secret a Christian, they were led to conform exteriorly to the king's desires. It is possible their consciences may have been so ill-formed that under the circumstances they thought themselves justified. To avert the utter ruin of their country, may have been considered by them a sufficiently justifying cause: otherwise it is hard to understand how those, who a little before professed themselves ready to die, would almost immediately and to an individual abandon their positions. But whatever may have been their motives, they consented to conform, and offered the worship demanded by the laws of the Magi. The king was overjoyed beyond measure; he increased their honors; bestowed on them considerable tracts of land, and charged them with the execution of his design against their countrymen. The orders given to them, and to the Magi who accompanied them, were to the effect that Christianity should be utterly abolished in Armenia. The royal mandate ordering this ran as follows: "The entire profession and name of Christianity shall be suppressed in all the states of the king. The churches shall be closed and the doors sealed; the ornaments of the sanctuaries according to the registries shall be confiscated to the royal treasure. The chanting of the psalms and the reading of the prophecies shall be abolished, and the Christian priests shall not dare to instruct the people in their houses. The monks and the religious shall leave their monasteries and quit their costume for that of laics. The ladies of rank and the families of princes should give the example and be the first to adopt the worship of the Magi. The children of nobles as well as of the humbler classes shall resort to the public square to be instructed by the Magi in the religion of Zoroaster. The Christian laws of marriage are hereby abrogated. Instead of taking one wife, men shall be at liberty to take several. Fathers may marry their own

daughters, brothers their sisters, sons their mothers, and grandchildren their grandfathers. No animal destined for human food, whether sheep, or goat, or ox, or swine, or fowl can be slain without being first offered to the gods. It shall not be permitted to make unleavened bread. It shall not be permitted to cast dung or filth into the fire, nor to wash one's hands with cow's piss. Neither otters, nor foxes, nor hares may be killed; but serpents, lizards, frogs, and other noxious creatures shall be completely destroyed and an account taken of the number killed. All that concerns immolations and sacrifices, the disposition to be made of and the quantity of ashes, the order of beasts and the animals shall be written and annotated in the royal register."

There were in the army that directed its course towards Armenia with these instructions, several faithful Christians who had preserved intact their holy religion—who had not followed the example set them by their leaders. These were in profound affliction at the apostasy committed by their brethren and reproached them severely therewith. Intelligence of the approach of the army and object in view was sent ahead by the faithful Christians who accompanied the expedition. The news caused the profoundest grief and awakened the greatest enthusiasm in the country. The people were convinced that if their faith had to be preserved it should be by meeting and opposing the enemy by force of arms. With an admirable energy and zeal the bishops and clergy rose to the level of the occasion. Instructions were forwarded by the prelates to all the people subject to their authority, calling upon them to rise en masse and repel by force the hostile invading army that would rob them of their creed and their country. The appeal was heard with respect and was responded to with enthusiasm. The whole people rose, as if one man, and hastened with sword in hand to defend their country and

their altars. It was a glorious sight to see such unity and determination of purpose in behalf of so noble a cause.

At the end of four months the hostile army arrived on the confines of Armenia. For five and twenty days the troops remained inactive, but at the end of that period the chief of the Magi, attended by a considerable number of followers, made an attack upon a Christian church with a view of demolishing it, just at the moment the people were assembling for the purpose of divine worship. Inflamed by a holy zeal in defense of their sacred rights, the outraged Christians armed with stones and clubs rushed wildly upon their assailants, drove them back to their quarters and quietly conducted the divine service. The moral effect this produced in the country was most beneficial to religion. From all quarters persons hastened to the scene of victory and congratulated their brethren on this, their first, important success. In the midst of this common rejoicing, not the least affecting and notable circumstance was the spectacle of the venerable clergy with the divine volume in their hands, imploring the blessings of heaven upon their countrymen and encouraging them to struggle for their faith.

On returning to the camp, the chief of the Magi, who had conducted the marauding expedition, was so completely disheartened that he represented to the authorities the impossibility of destroying the religion under such circumstances, and the propriety of abandoning the enterprise. "It is impossible," said he, "unless the gods themselves take up the matter, that the law of Zoroaster should take root in that country, for the sentiment of the nation is too clearly against it." The governor did not come into his views about abandoning the project; but to succeed by force of arms, was clearly a formidable task and hardly to be expected in the face of the united,

determined resolve of the whole nation. Dissimulation, seduction and treachery were more likely to be effective under the circumstances. If only disunion could be introduced into the nation, the loss of faith and nationality might be speedily and confidently expected. The governor accordingly conducted himself adroitly, employing for his purpose flattery, dissimulation and hypocrisy. He invited to his table and honored by his presence the principal men of the nation. He took occasion of their presence to extol the kindness and liberality of the king, a proof of which he gave in the costly presents he then bestowed upon them. The bishops at once saw the danger that threatened their unhappy country; they were far more alarmed at this insidious proceeding of the governor than at the appearance of an armed force in their country. To thwart his evil designs they accordingly met in council and invited to meet them, one of the apostate chiefs, Vartan. Upon receiving from him an assurance of regret for his faithless conduct, they absolved him from his crime and charged him with the defense of the faithful. He placed himself at their head and separated from the Magi. No overt act had yet been committed by either party; but it was clear that at any moment the flame of passion might burst forth. The occasion was supplied by an outrage committed in the Church. Some of the apostates, forgetful of the danger they ran as well as the reverence due to the things of God, made an attack upon the clergy, tore their sacred vestments and extinguished the lights employed in the divine service. This produced the opposite result from which it was designed, for it tended to unite the faithful only the more closely and to bind them together as one man. It even reclaimed from their error most of the apostate nobles. All Armenia was alive to the outrage and the entire nation flew to arms. On the following day

a great body of the faithful, led by the reformed princes, made an attack upon the Persian camp. The Christians were pre-eminently victorious. The Persian troops were completely routed; several of their number fell in the combat, while a large body of Persians fell into the hands of the faithful. The faithless Vassag was of the number, but was spared his life on swearing on the gospel to remain faithful ever after to the Christian faith. The effect produced on the country by this success was electric. It completely aroused the whole Christian population and bound them together in the strongest bonds of brotherhood. "Let us think only of acquiring a great name and saving our souls," cried they. "Let Jesus live for ever in our hearts; Jesus, who will raise us from the dead when ages have past." Taking advantage of these admirable dispositions, the bishops and princes summoned a general assembly, with the object of taking the necessary steps for driving the invaders from the land. As Christians warriors, the Armenian army placed its whole confidence in God and, to secure to themselves the divine aid, prepared themselves for the combat by fasting and prayer. It was a noble spectacle to see thousands of warriors assisting at the divine mysteries around the altar of God, preparatory to striking for the liberties of their people. And equally glorious and consoling was it to witness the result that attended their struggle; for, having attacked their enemies, town after town and fortress after fortress fell into their hands, till the symbol of the Christian faith dominated all the land. The safety of the country, however, was not yet secured, for, large bodies of reinforcements having arrived from Persia, the Christian troops now saw themselves opposed to superior numbers. In this critical position it was deemed best to solicit the aid of the Byzantian emperor, with the assurance of submitting to

his authority, if successful in the war. The document, in which this petition for aid from the emperor was made, is as follows: "Joseph, bishop, and all the bishops, my confreres, together with all the Armenian troops: Vassag, the governor, Nerchabouh de Rimpostian, the general Vartan, and all the princes, to the emperor Theodosius Cæsar, as well as to his entire army, health and prosperity!—We know that you reign over sea and land by your pacific will and that nothing can oppose your authority. The annals of our country teach us that your valiant and virtuous predecessors, after having subjugated Europe, subjugated also Asia, and that from the confines of China to the pillars of Hercules none has been able to withdraw from their authority. We, also, belonged to them, and the Cæsars deigned to style our country their great and beautiful fief. By this intimate union, our father and our king, Diatrid, received from you touching testimony of your kindness, when, during his youth, having escaped from the regicide hands of his uncle, who had just killed his father Chosroes, he took refuge with you, O Cæsar. It has been by your assistance that he reigned in the kingdom of his father; it is by you that during his reign he received the faith of Jesus Christ from the holy pontiff of Rome, on his visit there in company with the first patriarch, St. Gregory the illuminator, by whom all the countries to the north of Asia have seen the light of the Gospel. But now the children of the East desire to extinguish that light and to cast us back into our former darkness. Relying upon the aid of your invincible power, O Cæsar, we have already done what lay in our power in resisting the efforts of our enemies, but we are unable to do any more. We are preparing for the struggle, for we prefer death with God than life with the stain of apostasy; and if you aid us in our enterprise you shall doubly save our lives, that is to say our souls and our bodies. If you delay in this pressing

matter, this flame may extend to other countries besides ours."

Theodosius received the petition graciously and promised the solicited aid, but his sudden death, which happened immediately after, prevented the fulfillment of his promise. His successor, Marcion, was not as generous. He refused to carry out his predecessor's intentions; left Armenia to its fate; and even assured the Persian monarch that he would not interfere with his designs. Armenia was now thrown upon her own resources; she had to conquer or be conquered. The news of Marcion's policy produced profound regret and disappointment in the country. But the people were not wholly discouraged. All seemed determined to defend, at the cost of their lives, their faith and their fatherland. All capable of bearing arms were summoned thereto, and the entire army was divided into three divisions. A splendid future awaited their efforts, had all been faithful to the cause; but treachery was in the camp. The hopes of the entire nation were dashed to the ground by the faithlessness of one man. Vassag, the apostate prince, whose life, as the reader is aware, was spared on his solemn assurance of repentance, was unfortunately placed in a position of trust from which he should have been carefully excluded. He was put in command of the third division of the army. This gave him an opportunity of aiding the enemy and of betraying his unfortunate nation. Having taken possession of some of the impregnable forts and seduced by his seductive reasoning some of those under him in command, he communicated with the Persian commander, informing him of the actual state of affairs and of the approach of the Armenian general, Vartan. The communication despatched by the traitor was as follows: "I have moved the first army corps from the vicinity of Her and Tarrevent towards Aderbeidgan: I have the second under my command, and I shall take care that

these shan't in anything obstruct the royal troops. Moreover, I have been careful to locate them in the interior of the country. Being necessitated to give Vartan the third corps to march on Albania, I have at least seen that it was the smallest. Don't fear to encounter it: I am sure you will easily conquer it, for you have the advantage in numbers."

The Armenian force was hardly one third that of the Persians, while the latter had also a very decided advantage in the ground occupied for the battle. Despite these disadvantages, the Armenians were still undismayed. They had confidence in the cause they sustained: they put their confidence in Him in whose hands are the destinies of all and whose will decides the fate of battles. "It is not to obtain a perishable victory," cried their general, addressing the Lord before the battle, "that we ask the victory. It is that those who know thee not, as well as those who do, may hear henceforth the preaching of the Gospel and understand that you are the Lord of life and death; and that it is from your will that victory and defeat cometh. It is equal to us to die for your love, but if we slay these infidels, we shall be the avengers of truth."

Thus encouraged the Christian troops prepared for the combat. Conscious of the glorious cause in which they were engaged, they rushed without fear and with impetuosity on the enemy. God was on their side, he strengthened their hands and sustained their ardor. The Persians were unprepared for so vigorous an attack; they fell back from their original position. What was first an orderly retreat, became afterwards a general flight. The Christians, elated at the success beyond their expectation, pressed on the rear of their adversaries and ceased not to harass them till they took refuge in the fortress of Derbend. This magnificent victory was for the moment of greater importance to the Christians than they contemplated. It secured

to them, at least for a time, the peace that they were struggling so ardently for. Humiliated and undeceived as to the real power of the Christians, the Persian monarch now came to terms and granted the believers the free exercise of their religion. The royal pleasure was made known to the governors of all the provinces, who were commanded to immediately liberate all the Christian faithful who were then detained in prison on account of their religious belief. But this was merely the result of fear and the consequence of an erroneous apprehension regarding the aid likely to be furnished by the Greeks. Hence, on learning from the Byzantian emperor that no apprehension need be entertained from that quarter, Yezdejerd returned to his former policy. If he had failed in a first campaign, that was no reason why he should in a second. He accordingly gave orders to his prime minister, Miher Nerseh, to get in readiness a powerful army with the view of wholly subduing Armenia. The Vizier depended more on strategy and cunning for the accomplishment of his master's design, than upon numbers and bravery. For the effectual working of the former, he summoned to his aid the only person wholly qualified for that purpose in the country—the apostate, Vassag. To engage this traitor's active co-operation in his nefarious design, he excited his cupidity and flattered his vanity by promising him the throne of Armenia. The scheme succeeded entirely according to his wishes. Vassag promised his aid, and succeeded so admirably that within a limited period the seeds of discord and disunion were sown and fructified in the hearts of the chiefs. He attained his ends, mainly, by the most unblushing and audacious assertions regarding the king's pacific intentions, assuring his countrymen that Yezdejerd had no religious animosity against any one and was not desirious of interfering with the worship of his subjects, provided they submitted to his temporal

rule. At the same time, he artfully conciliated the neighboring peoples in favor of his master's pretentions and prevented them from rendering assistance either in sympathy or arms to the afflicted Armenians. The latter, however, prepared for the combat. Animated by a spirit of patriotism and an ardent zeal for the cause of divine truth, the national forces, at the call of Vartan, assembled on the plains of Ardaze. Thither, to encourage by their presence, repaired a considerable number of the clergy, headed by the venerable prelate, Joseph. In an extensive, animated speech, Vartan, the commander-in-chief, reminded his troops of the sacredness of the cause for which they were assembled to fight. He insisted, mainly, on the fact that they were fighting for their faith and the important consequences that were sure to follow even in case of defeat. "For," said he, "if we have the happiness to die defending this cause, a glorious crown awaits us."

The Persian army, under the command of Mouchgan, was by this time approaching the Armenian frontier. Vassag, the traitor and apostate, was not idle; he despatched envoys to the Armenian camp, assuring the people that Yezdejerd had bound himself by oath not to interfere with their religious belief and that all he ambitioned was their temporal submission. His proposals were met with the contempt that they deserved—they were promptly rejected by all. Meantime, the troops prepared themselves for mortal combat. An altar was raised on which were celebrated the divine mysteries, whereat all assisted with sentiments of the profoundest devotion. On the 2nd. of June, 451, both armies engaged in the deadly struggle. The numbers were greatly unequal, and to this is to be attributed the defeat sustained by the Armenians, for during the contest they exhibited the most undaunted bravery. The losses to the Persians were over 3500, while the

numbers that fell, on the part of the Christians, were little over 1000.

After this defeat the Armenian forces fell back upon their fortified camps. The depravity of the traitor Vassag now showed itself as pernicious as ever. On the ground of a general amnesty being granted to all who should submit to the royal authority, Vassag prevailed upon the occupants of one of the fortresses to lay down their arms. But no sooner had they submitted, than he slaughtered them all in cold blood, to the number of two hundred and upwards. This horribly treacherous act opened the eyes of the Armenians, at last, to the genuine character of this bloodthirsty apostate. None would any longer confide in his promises, no more than in those of his master: he was a man without honor, principle or humanity. He acted solely for self and was influenced by the basest of motives. Had it only suited his purpose, he would as readily have acted the traitor to the master he served, as to the people he so shamefully dishonored, The bulk of the population, rather than fall into the hands of so unscrupulous a monster, fled the land of their birth and took refuge in the neighboring nations. Many on the other hand, without quitting their native soil, endeavored to elude his grasp by fleeing to the mountains and burying themselves in the forests. Thence from these retreats they emerged as opportunity offered, and carried on, much to the annoyance and discomfiture of the enemy, a harassing, destructive guerrilla warfare. The invading army had also to suffer considerably at this time from the Huns, who then made a descent on the country and slew in combat several of Yezdejerd's men.

These frequent surprises and defeats made their impression on the mind of the king. Haughty and imperious in character, he could not suffer his authority to be thus set

at open defiance with impunity. The grand Vizier was accordingly summoned to account for the losses sustained. To exculpate himself he shifted the blame to Vassag and counselled his royal master to summon that official to his presence. Yezdejerd accepted the advice: Vassag was summoned to the royal presence and upon the most convincing testimony was shown to have been unfaithful to all. It was then only a question as to the nature of the punishment to be inflicted. Artful, as all orientals by nature are, the monarch concealed for the moment his resentment. Meantime, he gave orders for a magnificent banquet to which the leading nobles and officers of state were invited. Vassag was amongst the number. When all had taken their places, an officer of justice appeared and, armed with the royal commission, arrested, in the name of his sovereign, the apostate official. Stripped of his insignia of office and loaded with chains, the fallen officer was led from the festive board to be immured in a squalid dungeon. His affliction was not confined to that. Fallen from his high and responsible position and made to herd with the lowest of criminals, he had the further mortification of knowing that he was regarded even by them with the most sovereign contempt. To add to his chagrin, he was daily dragged from his prison and exposed, in the public square, to the derision and mockery of the people at large; while the riches, he had by rapine and treachery amassed, were confiscated by the royal prerogative. These, however, were only the evils that man was capable of inflicting. Heavier still were reserved for him at the hands of divine justice. The latter were in the shape of an incurable malady and pestilential fever. Ulcers, in which were generated countless numbers of worms, broke out on all parts of his body: his sight and hearing were seriously affected thereby. His lips and nose mouldered away into

corruption and were devoured by the vermin with which his body was infested. The *mal odor* that exhaled from his rotting body became insupportable to all, even to himself. Thus died, destested by all, an object of horror to himself and impenitent before God, the traitor and apostate, Vassag. Even after death, dishonor pursued him, for his body, instead of being consigned to the tomb, was ignominiously dragged through the streets and finally abandoned to become the prey of birds and beasts. Thus does disloyalty towards God and man, recreancy to faith and fatherland, meet with its merited reward.

The punishment awarded to Vassag is not to be regarded as an evidence of a change of sentiment or of a more enlightened and liberal policy on the part of Yezdejerd towards the Armenian people. The princes and priests were still retained in prison and made to suffer for their love of country and religion. It was at this period, 454, that Persia undertook a war against the Huns. It proved an unfortunate campaign for the aggressor, for the Persian monarch was necessitated to retrace his steps into his own country, after having suffered the loss of the greater part of his army. To attribute the reverse to the divine displeasure, never entered into his mind. He was exasperated beyond measure, and in his wrath sought for a victim on whom to pour out his vengeance. The Vizier understood the position: he was aware of the fickle character of his master's mind and feared lest his royal displeasure might not fall upon himself. To avert such a contingency, he cast the blame upon the faithful Christians, representing the anger of the gods against the Persian arms as the consequence of the faithful's contempt of the pagan divinities. "O King," said he, "our priests and sacred books teach us that none can resist your invincible power. But the gods are indignant on account of the Christians, who des-

pise our faith and profane our temples and whom you have thus long suffered to exist." This was supplemented by the lying assurance that the incarcerated Christians were constantly employed in invoking maledictions on the head of the monarch. Thus deceived, the king became inflamed beyond measure against the Christians. Without waiting to investigate the charges made against them, he immediately ordered all that were in prison to be presently tortured and put to the sword. The priests were the first who felt the weight of his anger. For forty days they were confined in a dark, humid prison, on rations barely sufficient for the sustainment of human life. This was succeeded by the withdrawal of all corporeal food, their prison doors being closed and sealed and all communications between them and the outer world being wholly intercepted during the space of fifteen additional days. At the end of that period, when the governor came to open their prison doors, instead of finding them dead, as he expected, he beheld them reposing tranquilly, encompassed by a bright, luminous light which lit up the entire prison. Astonished at this prodigy, he had the holy confessors brought before him, and learning from them the words of divine truth, he had the courage and wisdom to embrace it.

A conversion of so remarkable a character, the governor being not only a prominent officer of the state, but also one of the chief Magi, and a man of superior ability and talent, became the occasion of much difficulty and embarrassment to the authorities. The king's pleasure was accordingly solicited, and his answer betrays the malevolence of his disposition. He ordered, in the first instance, the most absolute secrecy regarding the vision, lest the ignorant, hearing it, might abandon their pagan superstition and join the ranks of the faithful. While again, on the other hand, the governor's reputation for learning being

great, it was deemed unadvisable to invite him to controversy, or to punish him with death, as either might be only adding to his renown as a Christian disciple. It was consequently determined to send him into exile, a resolution which was carried into effect by his being banished to the desert of Khorassan. The same lenity was not observed towards those who were the occasion of his miraculous conversion, for, after being cruelly tortured, by being dragged on the ground till they were more dead than alive, they were all finally massacred in cold blood.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PERSECUTION IN AFRICA—GENSERIC MAKES A DESCENT ON ROME, BUT ABSTAINS FROM SLAUGHTERING THE INHABITANTS AT THE ENTREATY OF LEO—GENSERIC DIES—HE IS SUCCEEDED BY HUNERIC—HE ACTS THE PART OF HEROD—NONE BUT ARIANS TOLERATED—THE CLERGY BANISHED—THE KING'S DEVICE TO CORRUPT THE CATHOLIC FAITH—THE GUARDIANS OF THE FAITH STAND FIRM—THE CHURCHES ALL CLOSED AND RELIGIOUS SERVICES SUSPENDED—CRUELTY OF HUNERIC—THE VENGEANCE OF HEAVEN FALLS UPON THE COUNTRY—TERRIBLE SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE FROM FAMINE.

While the proceedings detailed in the last chapter were happening in Armenia, the Christians of Africa were undergoing like afflictions at the hands of their cruel master, Genseric. The object of this heretical tyrant being to destroy the Catholic faith and name, he exiled, as we have seen, all the bishops from their various sees and took possession of their churches and temporalities. The spirit with which he was animated may be gathered from his answer to some of the exiled prelates, who solicited permission merely to dwell amongst the faithful without any official recognition on the part of the authorities. "I have resolved," said he, "to destroy your name and religion and you have the audacity to solicit my permission to remain in the country." This stern resolve, however, he afterwards considerably modified, for, at the request of Valentinus, he permitted the appointment of a bishop in the person of Deogratias. This eminently holy man, whose name was afterwards placed on the catalogue of the saints, was appointed to the see of Carthage on the 24th of October, 454.

Genseric, not contented with his African possessions, now formed the intention of invading and subjecting Italy. As soon as it became known that his troops were on their way, alarm seized upon Rome. The emperor, Maximin, sought to save himself by flight, but was stoned to death in the streets by an indignant people. Three days later the barbarian entered the capital, but, at the entreaties of the sovereign pontiff, Leo, abstained from the slaughter of the inhabitants, contenting himself with the pillage of the city which he continued to sack during a period of fourteen days. Loaded with booty he returned to his oriental possessions, but the taste for plunder, which he acquired in the sack of Rome, would not permit him to remain inactive. Accordingly he returned again and again to the scene of of his former devastations, reducing the people frequently to slavery, numbers of whom he carried back into Africa as captives. To rescue these from their unhappy condition and to restore them to the bosom of their families, was the anxious care of the bishop of Carthage. But the means at his disposal being insufficient for the ransom of all, he purchased the liberty of those he deemed most deserving, employing for this purpose the proceeds derived from the sale of such articles as were not regarded as absolutely necessary for the services of religion. Thus the sacred utensils were parted with to purchase the liberty of the Christian captives.

The banishment of so many chiefs of religion was not sufficient to satisfy the antipathy of Genseric. On the contrary he seemed to grow more tyrannical with time. Hence upon the death of Deogratias, he issued an order requiring the ecclesiastics of all ranks and in every locality to immediately place in his hands the volumes of the Sacred Scriptures then in their possession. He hoped by this means to weaken and corrupt the faith of the people, and

finally to detach them from their holy religion. The attempt was promptly resisted and an unqualified refusal returned. This led to the most shocking and barbarous atrocities. Taking advantage of the days of divine service, when the people were assembled for the celebration of the divine mysteries, the minions of government, aided by a posse of troops, not unfrequently burst into the assemblies, arrested the divine volumes from the hands of the lectors, maltreated those who dared to remonstrate, and even in some instances, proceeded to the horrible excess of trampling under foot the most adorable sacrament of the altar.*

Following quickly upon the perpetration of these atrocious proceedings, was an order dismissing all of the Catholic faith from government employ, and another, commanding the closing of all the Catholic churches in Carthage. These tyrannical measures were not suffered to go with impunity. God removed their author, and restored, for the moment, partial tranquillity to the Church. Genseric, who for fifty years ruled in Africa, died on the 25th of January, 477. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Huneric, who, though cruel by nature, yet showed himself for the moment less hostile to the faithful, than his recently deceased parent. He permitted them to assemble for the worship of God, and at the instance of the emperor Zeno, even allowed the election of a bishop to the see of Carthage. But no sooner had the influence of this prelate for good been felt by the Arians, than they incited their master against him, and subjected him and his flock to all manner of indignities. The Catholic officers were once more driven from court, and sent to labor in the fields. It is not at all to be wondered at that Huneric treated, thus harshly, the unoffending Catholics, for by nature he was a monster of cruelty. To secure the succession of the throne to the members of his

* Belouino, vol 6, p. 172.

own family, he acted the part of Herod. According to the order of succession, arranged by Genseric, the next to the throne was Theodoric's eldest son. To remove him, was the tyrant's first care. On a false charge, got up for the purpose, he had the young prince accordingly arrested, and put out of the way. The other children and their father escaped with being exiled, but a like leniency was not shown towards those of lesser rank, who, though of the nobility, were butchered in several instances, on the most frivolous pretences, together with numerous priests of the Arian creed. Under such circumstances, it was not to be hoped that the Catholics would experience much clemency. Indeed, the deeds of blood perpetrated by Huneric in his own family, and towards the professors of his own faith, were only the prelude for the persecution of the faithful. About 482, he ordered that none but those professing the Arian doctrine, should be employed in any of the offices of state. This was the fore-runner of that severity and oppression with which he visited the faithful, almost immediately after. The order dismissing the Catholics from their various employments, unless they conformed to the Arian faith, was followed by a still more iniquitous proceeding. That was an an attempt to extort, under the pressure of fear, an acknowledgement from the female Catholic religious, of illicit amours between them and their confessors. To accomplish this nefarious design, Huneric had these holy religious subjected to the cruelest torture. Some were suspended in the air with weights attached to their feet, in order to render their suffering still more acute; while others had red-hot plates of iron applied to their breasts and backs, a hope being entertained, that rather than suffer such exquisite torture, they would avow their complicity. But it was all in vain, for, sustained by the grace of God, they nobly persevered to the end, several dying under the torture, while those, who outlived it, were disfigured for life.

Baffled in this attempt of finding a plea for his cruelty, the tyrant next had arrested about 500 of the clergy, and, on the ground of having assisted at the divine mysteries, had them deported into exile. Amongst these were several who on account of age and infirmity were unable to travel. One in particular, St. Felix, bishop of Abbir, being wholly paralytic, was unable to move. An application was accordingly made to the king, to permit him to remain where he was till he died. The brutal answer returned by the tyrant was, that if he were unable to ride, he should be bound and dragged to his destination by oxen.

On the departure for the desert, of this noble band of generous confessors, the Arian tempters endeavored to shake their constancy. "Why," said these agents, "are you so obstinate, why will you disobey your king, whose favor you can so readily gain?" To this all unanimously responded: "We are Christians, we are Catholics." As the holy confessors set out for their destination the spectacle was touching in the extreme. From all quarters the faithful came in great numbers to wish their beloved pastors a parting adieu. Casting themselves at the feet of these their benefactors, they addressed them in the most pathetic language, lamenting their loss and bewailing their own desolate condition, inasmuch as now they would no longer have any one to perform for them the rites of their holy religion. This expression of love and affection on the part of the people for their faithful ministers, instead of moving to compassion the enemies of the faith, served only to irritate them the more and caused them to exercise greater severity upon the members of their charge. So severe were the sufferings the confessors encountered on the journey, that several died on the way, from exhaustion and ill-treatment. And happy indeed for them that they did, for those of their brethren who survived this terrible ordeal, lived only to eke out a

miserable existence in the capacity of slaves, till death put an end to their sufferings.

It might be supposed that the exile of so many of the clergy and the peaceable conduct of the people they left, would be sufficient to appease the anger of this most implacable tyrant. But the nature of the Vandal king was not to be satisfied as long as the Catholics remained in the empire. To destroy them or get rid of them by banishment, was not what could be thought of, on account of their numbers; while, on the other hand, to suffer them to exist in the country even deprived of their priests, was a constant subject of annoyance to the tyrant. Hence, urged by the Arian patriarch, on the ground of adjusting the differences of religion, the emperor issued an edict summoning the Catholics to a controversy to be held at Carthage. The king's object, as was shown by subsequent events, was to obtain by threats and promises the Catholics' adhesion to the Arian faith :—"Huneric, king of the Vandals and of the Alans, to all the bishops who are defenders of Consubstantiality.—Not merely once but several times has it been prohibited your priests to hold their assemblies in the Vandal dominions, lest by their seductions they might succeed in perverting Christian souls. Several amongst you in contempt of this ordinance have been found celebrating mass in divers places, and claiming to be in possession of the only true faith. Inasmuch, then, as we are desirous that scandal should not any longer exist in the provinces which God has subjected to our rule, we, with the concurrence of our holy bishops, desire to make known to you that we will require, on the first day of the calends of February, your presence at Carthage in order to discuss with our venerable brethren the principles of our faith, and that you may be able to demonstrate, if you can, from the Sacred Scriptures that the doctrine of Consubstantiality, which you hold, is the true faith. We have

addressed this edict to all the bishops of your faith in Africa.—Given on the 13th of June, in the 7th year of our reign.—HUNERIC."

The Catholic bishops were taken entirely by surprise by this edict: they were not sure whether it meant persecution or conciliation. Huneric's previous career gave them little to hope that the document meant what it pledged. Interpreted in the light of the past, it was only a snare for the Catholic party. To disregard it, however, would be to expose them to the charge of contempt, and to furnish a plea for severity. The bishops, therefore, deemed it more prudent to accept the imperial summons, but on condition that others outside his majesty's dominions would be permitted to assist, assigning as a reason the fact that the matters to be treated were common to all, and not the property of individuals.* To this the monarch sternly objected, his purpose being not the acquisition of truth, but the attainment of his own unworthy ends. A darker or more insidious plot could hardly be devised.

On the day appointed for the conference, a large number of prelates assembled conformably to the royal invitation; but great was their astonishment on finding that a trial instead of a conference was awaiting many of their number. Like an artful tactician, Huneric managed to get out of the way the ablest of the Catholic prelates. By a series of calumnies prepared for the occasion, he ostensibly justified himself in having them arrested and condemned to death. His object being to strike terror into the hearts of the survivors, and to intimidate them from expressing their genuine sentiments, he had Letus the most renowned of the assembled prelates burned to death. But these horrible atrocities, so far from shaking their faith, or serving to

* The bishops sought to introduce strangers into the conference, in order to secure a freer expression of sentiment.

smother their religious convictions, seemed only to make them more courageous and defiant. For upon the opening of the conference, they immediately presented their profession of faith.

It was now clear to the baffled monarch that he had counted too securely on the compliance of the Catholic bishops; that nothing could shake the constancy of these admirable men; and that to destroy the Catholic religion in his dominions, it would be necessary to have recourse to a general persecution. Huneric accordingly issued an edict to this effect. By virtue of this document, the churches were every-where ordered to be closed and the services of religion suspended, until the Catholic faithful conformed to the Arian doctrine. The document, according to the royal instructions, was published on the same day in all the provinces, so that all the Catholic places of worship in the empire were simultaneously barred against the faithful. It was a melancholy spectacle to witness thousands of the faithful returning to their homes, unable to obtain an entrance into the temples of God, which they had erected out of their own funds and from which they were debarred, for no other crime than that of having refused to violate their conscience by joining with the unbelievers. The clergy, being the chief objects of the king's displeasure, were made to feel the weight of his authority, more than the laity. They were stripped of all their possessions, banished from the cities, and reduced to a condition of absolute want. The kind offices of friends and co-religionists were even denied to them, no one being allowed to receive them into their dwellings, or to extend to them the ordinary courtesies of hospitality, under pain of being burned alive. It is not difficult to understand the trials to which these venerable men, thus stripped of all their worldly emoluments and shut

out from the kind offices of the charity of friends and relatives, were made to undergo. As for the prelates who were driven from the conference, in conformity with the royal instructions, they endeavored to eke out a miserable existence in the suburbs of the city, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, but yet resolved to remain, lest an occasion might be given to their persecutors of affirming that they had fled from the discussion, unable to maintain their side of the case. Taking occasion of the emperor's presence, as he rode from the city on a tour of inspection, they reproached him with the maltreatment they had received at his hands, but the only effect of their remonstrance was a signal to his attendants to smite them for their presumption. Several were in consequence roughly handled and severely injured. Later on they were assembled by order of the tyrant and commanded to swear to a paper, the contents of which were wholly unknown to them. The object was to obtain a pretext for banishing them from the country. If they swore to the document, they were to be accused of violating the words of our Lord, "Thou shalt not swear at all," and if, on the other hand, they refused compliance, they were to be incriminated on the ground of disobedience to the royal command. It was plainly another instance of the Pharisees attempting to entrap the Redeemer. But not having the divine foresight of the Son of God, they readily fell into the snare laid for them by their enemies. All at first refused to swear, but the scruples of the more accomodating being overcome, by the assurance that the document contained only an acknowledgment of Huneric's son as legitimate heir to the throne, they agreed to do as required. Both parties were in consequence seized, cast into prison, and condemned on the grounds above stated. Some to the number of eight and twenty effected their escape, and se-

cured their liberty by flight; but the greater number became the victims of the royal tyranny.*

The closing of the churches, the suppression of divine service all through the country, and the exile of the bishops and priests, was not sufficient to satisfy the implacable hatred of Huneric. At the same time that he exiled the clergy, he despatched every-where through the country, his agents with orders to force, by every manner of torture, the Catholics to a compliance with his orders in the matter of abjuring their religion, and conforming to the Arian doctrine. To attain the end of their unholy mission, these unscrupulous ministers of an unscrupulous king resorted to every extreme. They exhausted in a measure all manner of torture. Some of their victims they burned to death, some they flayed alive, and some they flogged till they expired under the lash. Neither age, nor sex, nor condition was any preservative against their horrible atrocities. And when all their efforts proved unavailing, these ministers of satan resorted to the ludicrous extreme of baptizing their victims by force. The atrocities thus perpetrated, impelled many to abandon their country, causing them to seek a home in the neighboring countries where, in the profession of their faith, they might be allowed to remain unmolested.

The cruelty of the royal executioners had not yet entirely exhausted itself. Exile, flogging, hanging, and burning alive, were excesses from which the mind turns in horror, but they were not the extent to which the sufferings of the faithful were carried. There was still a further extreme. That was the exposing naked, to the vulgar gaze of a licentious rabble, those whose years, sex, and condition should have saved them, independent of the ordinary motives of modesty, from so horrible an alternative. "Torment me as you please," cried one of the victims, "only

* Belouino, vol. 6., p. 206.

spare me in this." But the only effect of her prayer was to have her elevated the higher in the presence of the barbarous multitude. Nor was this the extreme of the sufferings of the faithful. Hatred is inventive, and in this instance it proved how fertile is the imagination of man for evil as well as for good. At Typore in Mauritania, an Arian bishop was appointed to the charge of a district of Catholics. These almost in a body fled from his presence as they would from the face of their deadliest enemy. It was a noble and gratifying sight to thus witness a community giving evidence to the doctrines they believed in, by indignantly rejecting the ministrations of him they regarded as an enemy of their holy religion. But their conscientious, united adherence to truth did not save them from the anger of the tyrant. Several who had fled from the country at the approach of the Arian bishop, were arrested by order of the emperor and condemned to have their tongues cut from the roots. Marvelous, however, to consider, He, in whose behalf they suffered this torture, did not still deny them the power of speech, the most satisfactory evidence being furnished by credible witnesses, that the mutilated Christians still spoke as before.* In short during this persecution every manner of cruelty was resorted to, to shake the constancy of the faithful. Some had their eyes torn out, others their ears and noses cut off, others again an arm or a leg, while it was not an unusual but an ordinary thing to find men mutilated in some part of their body.

Such horrible cruelty drew down at length the divine indignation on the country, in the shape of a terrible famine which devastated the land. It would be impossible to describe accurately the sufferings to which the inhabitants were reduced in consequence. Nearly all the cattle perished;

* Belouino, 211.

the roads were strewn with the bodies of the dead; commerce ceased; and the pall of death hung over the entire land. To Carthage, from all parts, thousands fled in the hope of obtaining a meagre subsistence. But upon arriving at the capital they found that their hopes were in vain, for the gates of the city were barred against all of their class, by orders of the monarch who, meantime, remained shut up in his palace, thinking only of his personal safety. Thus repelled from the doors of the royal abode, these skeleton victims of want spread themselves over the suburbs and back into the country, wandering in aimless pursuit of a morsel of food to sustain their wretched existence, till death put an end to their miseries.

Vast numbers of slaves too, whom their masters dismissed for want of provisions, also wandered through the country until they fell victims to the general dearth or to the plague which then raged through the empire. In fact the whole country was turned into a veritable charnel house, the dead being encountered on all sides and the living differing little from those who had just fallen victims to want. It was in the midst of this universal desolation, drawn down upon the land by the impiety of its ruler, that Huneric died. His death was as horrible as his career had been atrocious. It was a counterpart of that of the author of his creed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SCHEME FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FAITH IN ARMENIA—THE NESTORIAN HERESY PATRONIZED—HUNERIC DIES AND IS SUCCEEDED BY GONDAMOND—PEACE IS RESTORED TO THE CHURCH—THRASAMUND SUCCEEDS TO THE THRONE—HE IS AN ENEMY OF THE FAITHFUL—SUFFERINGS OF THE CHRISTIANS IN ARABIA AND ETHIOPIA—THRASAMUND DIES—NOT MUCH PERSECUTION FOR THE NEXT CENTURY—THE EMPEROR OF THE WEST, LEO THE ISAURIAN, PERSECUTES THE CHURCH—HIS GREAT CRUELTIES AND EXCESSES—THE PEOPLE OF ITALY MANIFEST THEIR INDIGNATION—A COUNCIL ASSEMBLED AT ROME—FOR TEN YEARS THE FAITHFUL SUFFER ALL MANNER OF INDIGNITIES FROM THIS CRUEL MONARCH.

In the second last chapter we saw how the Christians of Armenia suffered under the Persian tyrant, Yezdejerd. If the same severe measures were not continued during the period of which we have just spoken, when enumerating the sufferings of the African Christians, it is not that the faith of the Armenians remained wholly unassailed. On the contrary, a more dangerous and insidious attack was now planned and attempted to be carried into effect. That was the toleration of the faith, coupled with contempt for its tenets. A scheme of this nature was far more to be feared and guarded against than high-handed oppression and unlimited physical violence, As an agent it has oftentimes proved more effective and destructive in undermining the faith than the severest of tortures. In this case it was not without its pernicious results. Idolatry advanced apace, pagan temples arose all over the land, fire-worship took the place of the pure worship of Christ Jesus, and it looked as if the whole land were destined to be robbed of truth and to become subject to error.

This deplorable state of affairs was increased by the efforts of an apostate Christian, who accused the patriarch with being in secret communication with the Romans. Nothing could be more appropriate and better calculated to inflame the anger of the king and his counselors against the religion, for they feared and hated the name and power of the Romans. The venerable ecclesiastic admitted, indeed, the fact of holding communication with Rome, as the source of all spiritual authority; but denied the criminality of such correspondence. This, however, was insufficient to satisfy the pagan ruler and he, accordingly, gave the patriarch the option of renouncing his faith and embracing that of Zoroaster or of being deprived of his dignity. It did not cost him much to embrace the latter.

Although the new method of dealing with the faithful had produced its pernicious effect in the minds of many and caused them to abandon the faith of their forefathers, there was still a very considerable number on whom neither violence flattery nor bribery could produce any impression. It was, therefore, to be seen that if these were to be swerved from their allegiance to religion it should be by a different means. The precise form of error they should be got to embrace was not so much a matter of importance as the fact of their having abandoned the Catholic creed. Such is the spirit of error—anything before Catholicity. With this object in view, the Persian monarch, patronized the once renowned college of Edessa, which then began to be infected with the doctrines of Nestorius. He protected the teachers and extended to them especial marks of his favor. One of their number, Barsumas by name, who had obtained a considerable influence over the king, readily persuaded his majesty of the disloyalty of the Catholics, on account of their being in communion with Rome. The question

then was not the compelling of the faithful to embrace Zoroasterism, but Nestorianism. In fact the king handed them over to Barsumas, who in turn handed them over to their passions. In a conciliabulum held for the ostensible purpose of advancing the interests of religion, this adroit, libidinous ecclesiastic permitted the clergy to violate their sacerdotal vows and to enter the bonds of matrimony. To encourage them thereto, he set them the example by taking unto himself a consort. In vain did the patriarch of Seleucia disclaim against so unholy a proceeding. His protest only drew down upon him the anger of the king, who ordered that the venerable ecclesiastic be suspended by a single finger and beaten to death.

This indirect war upon religion was thus continued against the faithful of Armenia till the death of Yezdejerd. His successor was a man of larger and more liberal views. His ambition was to see the country at peace and, with this object in view, he proposed an arrangement of the ecclesiastical difficulties. The faithful on their part were only too anxious for an adjustment of the case. It was accordingly agreed that all should be guaranteed the free exercise of their religious convictions, that no further attempt should be made on the faith of the Catholics, that no premium should be held out for apostasy, and that the administration of justice should be conducted irrespective of the religious belief of the subjects. On these grounds, peace was concluded and tranquillity ensued.

Huneric, king of the Vandals in Africa, was succeeded on the throne by Gondamond, in 484. The advent of this prince to the supreme power brought peace to the Church in that part of the world. He permitted the exiled priests and bishops to return to their respective charges. Once more the churches, which, for more than a decade during the preceding reign, had been closed to the faith-

ful, were reopened to the great joy and consolation of the Catholics. This happy turn of affairs brought universal gladness to all, but unhappily it was not destined to last very long. The blessings of peace had hardly begun to be tasted when, in the inscrutable decrees of divine providence, they were again destined to be forfeited. Two years after ascending the throne, Gondamond died and was succeeded by his son Thrasamund. Unlike his father, the new ruler showed himself an enemy of the Catholic cause. From the beginning of his reign, his antipathy to the faithful strongly manifested itself in the measures he adopted. Still preserving, however, an appearance of moderation and fairness, he proceeded no farther at first than inhibiting the election of bishops without his permission. As this was an invasion of the liberties of the Church, the order was disregarded by the prelates whose duty it was to provide for the wants of the faithful. They consecrated, accordingly, bishops to the sees that were vacant; but these were not permitted to enjoy their positions. The king became enraged at what he regarded as a slight to his authority and, in his unreflecting anger, resolved upon banishing the offenders with their brethren all through the country. In fine, by a despotic exercise of his power he banished from the whole of his dominions to the number of 220 Catholic bishops. These venerable confessors were relegated to the island of Sardinia, taking with them the body of their illustrious countryman Augustin. It does not appear that the irritated monarch proceeded any farther. The faithful were tolerated within his dominions, but even for this they had reason to be grateful.

A half a century later, in 553, the neighboring Churches of Arabia and Ethiopia suffered considerably for the faith. The persecutors in this instance were Jews. In retaliation for the proscription of his co-religionists in the Roman em-

pire, Dinian, king of Gemen in Arabia, massacred a caravan of Roman merchants while on their way through his dominions into Ethiopia. The Ethiopian monarch, though yet a pagan, was incensed at this outrage and, encouraged by the Roman emperor, made war upon Dinian, slew him, and plundered his kingdom. Before returning to his own dominions he placed on the throne of that country a Christian potentate, but he dying shortly after, the Jews, who were in the majority in the empire, succeeded in placing one of their co-religionists on the throne again. Smarting under the late wrong done them by the Ethiopian monarch, in placing a Christian potentate over their country, and embittered by the recollection of the disabilities endured by their co-religionists in the West, the Jews showed no mercy to the faithful. The recently-elected monarch to appease the feelings of his followers commenced an uncompromising war against the faithful; 280 priests were amongst the first victims of his hatred and cruelty. He was as treacherous as he was cruel. Having besieged the city of Narga and finding it impregnable, he stipulated upon oath the safety of the inhabitants in case of surrender. But no sooner was the place in his hands, than he instituted a general slaughter, burned the sacred edifices, and proceeded even to the extreme of disinterring the dead and consigning their remains to the flames. Even the sanctity of the deceased prelate Paul, who had been held by the people in the highest veneration, did not save his remains from profanation. In fact all who opposed his will and refused to renounce their holy religion, he immediately condemned to death and caused them to be cast into pits of fire prepared for that purpose. The true character of this persecution, the reader will best learn from the following letter sent by this cruel monarch to a pagan Arab chief, with the view of engaging him to enter upon a like course against the Christians:—

"This will inform you, my brother, that the king, whom the Ethiopians placed over our country, has ceased to exist. As they could not, in consequence of the approach of winter, pass into our country in order to establish a Christian king there according to custom, I myself have occupied all the country of the Homerites. My first work was to seize all the Christians who believed in Christ, threatening them with death if they did not become Jews like ourselves. I put to death all that I found, notably 280 priests. I exterminated together with them the Ethiopians who guarded the church and I have changed the edifice into a synagogue for ourselves. Subsequently I besieged Narga, the capital, with a force of 120,000 men. Having vainly assailed it during several days, I promised them upon oath their lives; but with the intention of not keeping faith with the Christians, my enemies. The place being accordingly surrendered, I ordered them to bring their gold and silver and riches of all kinds. This done, I took possession of them. I then demanded their bishop, Paul, to be brought. They assured me he was dead, but I did not believe them till they showed me his tomb. Whereupon I had his remains dragged forth and burned. As to their churches and their priests, and all who took refuge in them, I consumed all alike by the flames. All others who fell into my hands, I endeavored in like manner to get them to abjure Christ. But they refused, declaring that Christ is God and the Son of God, and they declared that death is preferable to life in such a case. Their prince, especially, spoke a great deal and did not even hesitate to attack me in opprobrious language. Hence I had all the leaders put to death. The women, we still continued to exhort, beseeching them to consider the sad lot of their husbands and entreating them to conform to our orders if they wished to save themselves and their children. But they were so little af-

fected by our exhortations that they lamented on the other hand having been preceded by the virgins we had already condemned to death, and they threw themselves into the midst of them, mourning at having been separated from their husbands." *

Such was the document forwarded by the Jewish king of Gemen to the pagan Arab chief. It produced the desired effect. Assembling his army, Almondar had the letter read in the presence of his troops many of whom were Christians. Then turning towards these he ordered them to instantly abjure the Christian faith. It was a glorious moment for these faithful soldiers of Christ. In the presence of an earthly potentate and before their pagan companions-in-arms an opportunity was presented of showing their allegiance to their sovereign master, the Savior of the world. Nobly did they discharge their duty. Immediately one of the number answered the demand made to renounce their faith in these dauntless terms: "It was not in your reign, O King, that we became Christians, that we should now abjure our Savior." This noble avowal was an indication of the firmness of all and saved them from torture and death. It was at this date, 523, that the enemy of the African Church, Thrasamund, king of the Vandals, died. During life and death he endeavored to be equally hostile to divine truth, for, before breathing his last he extorted a promise from Hilderic, his successor that, when seated on the throne, he would not suffer the Catholic churches to be reopened and would not grant any favors to the Catholics. Deeming himself bound by so unjust and unworthy a promise, but yet inclined to favor the faithful, he evaded the obligation by causing the churches to be opened before the demise of his parent.

A dreadful storm now ready to burst over the churches of Italy was averted only by the death of Theodoric, king of the

* Rohrbacher, vol. 9, p. 38.

Goths. Learning that the emperor Justin had commanded the restoration to the Catholics of the churches of which they were deprived, he resolved upon a war of reprisals in case such an order were carried into effect. But his death occurring immediately after, prevented the execution of his malevolent purpose.

During the next one hundred years, we do not meet with any open persecution of the Church. But at the end of that date, in 628, the Persian monarch overran the eastern portion of the Byzantian empire, captured Jerusalem and took off that part of the Holy Cross which had been placed there by St. Helen.

For three quarters of a century, that is, from 650, to 725, the Church suffered in the West, from her own unnatural children. Arianism, indeed, was dead; but it was replaced by Monothelitism, a nefarious heresy, which flourished as long as it had the support of the civil power. When Constance, however, who was its protector, passed out of life, it quickly ceased to exist. Since the removal of the seat of the western empire from the banks of the Tiber to the Bosphorus, it had been the misfortune of the Church that those in authority were interfering in matters of religion. We have already seen how injurious this was in the case of Valens and Valentinian. Another ruler of this class was now about to afflict with his presence, the Church of God. This was Leo, surnamed the Isaurian, so called from the country where he was born. Being an illiterate man, and unable to determine, with theological accuracy, the limits beyond which a virtuous custom would degenerate into evil, he set himself up as a reformer in the matter of symbols, as aids to the practice of virtue. Instead of a reformer, however, he became only a destroyer.

The objection to the use of images did not, indeed, originate with Leo; it was older by a couple of centuries. In

the reign of Zeno, Xenanius, bishop of Hierapolis, taught amongst other errors, that the reverence paid to images by the faithful was idolatrous. He pretended that it was unworthy of the supreme being and of his saints, to represent them under material forms. In this, Xenanius was only following the sensual Mahometans and the renegade Jews, both of whom waged an implacable war against everything of that character. Leo had been indoctrinated in the same fatal error, by one of this class; for, while yet a youth, and known only under his family name of Conon, he formed the acquaintance of a Jew who prejudiced him in this direction. It is even affirmed that he bound himself by oath to embrace that faith, in case he ever became emperor, and to abolish the use of images. Assuming this to be true, it is easy to see what an impression such a promise must have made upon his mind, on coming to the throne. Superstitious to infatuation, he could readily have believed himself an instrument in the hands of the Almighty for the reformation of abuses. That he was impressed with such an idea, the entire tenor of his career, as well as the judgment of contemporary historians, would lead us to believe. Had he been surrounded by different influences, he might have readily corrected his erroneous ideas. But unhappily, the element by which he lived was most hostile to the cause of divine truth. Amongst the number of his intimate acquaintances, upon arriving at the throne, was a certain Mahometan noble, named Beser. By him, the emperor was still further embittered against images, nor were there wanting even prelates of the Church, who spoke against the same. Constantine, bishop of Phrygia, had the audacity to hold what he termed a council, in which a condemnation was passed against the employment of pictures and images for devotional purposes. Leo, however, still deferred any action. He was aware of how

strong was the feeling all over the Catholic world, in favor of statuary and painting as a means of raising the people's thoughts to the Almighty, and, consequently, how difficult it would be to shake, much less overturn, such a faith. For ten years he accordingly dissembled his sentiments, but in 727 he publicly declared that to make images was to be guilty of idolatry. The true doctrine, on the other hand, was fearlessly laid down and nobly maintained by St. Gervasius, who endeavored, but in vain, to lead back the deluded emperor. The main difficulty the Saint had to contend with, was not so much the ignorance and obstinacy of the sovereign, as the erroneous, heretical tendencies of several of the prelates, who had espoused his cause. Thus Constantine of Nacolie, John of Synnada in Phrygia, and Thomas of Cludiopolis, were of his party. Encouraged by these, the emperor continued his open opposition to the veneration of images, a course which was not long in incensing the minds of the faithful to such a degree that finally the inhabitants of Greece and the Cyclades broke out into open revolt against the imperial authority, and even equipped a number of vessels, with the view of making open war upon Leo. An engagement took place in the vicinity of the capital, but Leo was the victor.

The opposition he thus met with only served to increase his antipathy. In his victory, he read an approval by God of his cause, and was accordingly encouraged to continue his opposition to images. Thus encouraged by his successes in arms and still more by the support he was receiving from a few of the priests and bishops of his dominions, he summoned a council for the 7th of January, 729, wherein a decree was drawn up condemnatory of the use of images. To this decree he sought to have the signature of St. Genevin appended, but that venerable man firmly demurred on the ground that none but a general council was capable

of dealing with so important a matter. His refusal drew down upon him the emperor's anger and the loss of his ecclesiastical position. Officers were immediatly sent to strip him of his honors, to deprive him of the patriarchate and finally to expel him from the church. This the creatures of royalty faithfully executed in the most offensive and brutal manner, smiting the aged prelate as they drove him forth from his residence. In the place of the deposed prelate, the emperor lost no time in placing a creature of his own—a priest named Anastatius. Not having anything to fear from this newly appointed dignitary, Leo now proceeded to the utmost extreme and shocked by his excesses even those whose sense of religion was not very great. For instance: in the vestibule of his palace, placed there by the piety and zeal of one of his predecessors, was an image of Christ upon the cross. This the emperor resolved upon removing and destroying. In vain did those who were present endeavor to prevent the outrage, their tears and entreaties were unheard, for the image was torn from the cross, broken and burned. Leo, being an unlettered man and unable to appreciate the beautiful, was an enemy of art and science, as most such men have proved themselves on coming to power.

At that time there was in Constantinople an imperial library consisting of about 30,000 vols —a very considerable number for that age. Attached was a school, where religious and secular instruction was given to all gratuitously by a staff of eminent professors. Such was the merit and learning of these, that by a law of the realm the emperor was not at liberty to undertake anything of importance without their approval and endorsement. In a contest such as he was then engaged in, it is clear that the endorsement of so eminent a body would be of invaluable service. But in vain did the emperor seek their approval. Threats

and promises were equally unavailing to extort from them a sanction of his proceeding. In fine, finding his efforts fruitless, he had the library set on fire and its occupants burned to death.

The emperor's rage was now turned against the citizens in general. To all alike it was forbidden to retain under any plea or on any ground, either in their churches or private dwellings, pictures or statues of saints or angels. Universal alarm coupled with universal regret, followed the publication of this edict. It was readily judged to be the precursor of a storm in which many would perish. In effect many through fear conformed to the emperor's will; but many, on the other hand, preferred death to apostasy. Of these some were beheaded, some scourged and some mutilated. The news of this iconoclastic persecution having reached Italy, the people were very much grieved and expressed their indignation against the emperor by overturning his statues and trampling them under their feet. Gregory III., who then occupied the papal throne, wrote a spirited remonstrance to the emperor, reminding him of the faith he had sworn to protect and of the wrong he was doing the Church by the course he was pursuing. "We have carefully guarded," says the holy pontiff, "your letters in the church of St. Peter together with those of your predecessors. In these letters sealed with your seal and subscribed by our own hand with cinabar, you confess our holy faith in all its purity and you declare accursed whoever shall dare to contravene the decisions of the Fathers. Who, then, has compelled you to look back after having advanced so well during ten years? During all that time you did not say a word about images and now you say they hold the place of idols and that those who revere them are idolators. You order them to be abolished entirely and you do not fear the judgment of God in scandalizing

not only the faithful but also the pagans. Why as emperor and Christian ruler have you not interrogated learned and experienced men? They would have taught you why God has prohibited the adoration of the works of men. The Fathers, our masters and the six councils have left us this tradition and you do not receive their testimony. We are necessitated, because you are rude and ignorant, to write to you in a rude manner, but full of sense and the truth of God. We conjure you, then, to quit your presumption and pride and to humbly listen to us;" etc.*

This letter never reached the emperor, for by his orders it was detained in Sicily. It was, therefore, manifest that little was to be expected from Leo, since he would not receive the sovereign pontiff's communcation. The pope accordingly, driven to the final resort by reason of the gravity of the case, summoned a council at Rome. It met in St Peter's and consisted of 83 bishops. It was decreed by these with the approbation of the Holy Father that whoever should wantonly destroy, profane or speak derogatory to the sacred image of Christ or his saints, should be deprived of the rites of the Church whilst living and of Christian burial when dead. This decision, together with the detained letter spoken of above, was forwarded to the emperor. At the same time all Italy joined in a supplication, beseeching his majesty to refrain from the course he was, pursuing. Instead of adopting the pope's and the people's advice, Leo became only the more confirmed in his resolve. He was angered at being dictated to in a matter of which he regarded himself as supreme arbiter. In consequence, the Christians were subjected to still greater oppression at his hands. Fines, imprisonment, and banishment were freely dealt out in the case of the unyielding; but death he did not resort to, not indeed that he

* Belouino, p. 338, vol. 6.

hesitated through humanity to inflict such a punishment, but lest he should be causing them to be honored as saints. As the persecution, however, continued, and the emperor became more and more angered, the lives of several paid the penalty of their fidelity to conscience in the matter of the veneration of images. Indeed, oftentimes even the greatest refinement of cruelty joined with the most sovereign contempt for the faith of the people in this particular regard was employed by the tyrant to shake the constancy of the martyrs. Thus the beard and hair of the victims were frequently besmeared with ignitible liquid matter to render them the more combustible, and as a cruel mockery under the circumstances the images of the saints were not unfrequently placed on the head of the victims, so that at one and the same moment both might be destroyed by the flames. For ten years, from 731 to 741, when God was pleased to rid the world of this monster, this terrible war against all that was most sacred in religious art was carried on by this fierce enemy of religion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LEO IS SUCCEEDED BY COPRONYMUS—HE FOLLOWS HIS FATHER'S COURSE —AN UNRELENTLESS WAR WAGED AGAINST RELIGIOUS STATUARY AND PAINTING—THE TORMENTS INFLICTED ON THE FAITHFUL—SHOCKING TREATMENT OF THE MONKS—COPRONYMUS' HORRIBLE DEATH—HE IS SUCCEEDED BY LEO IV—THE COUNCIL OF NICE—EXTINCTION OF ICONOCLASM—THE SARACENS IN SPAIN—THE COUNCIL OF CORDOVA—REVOLT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN THE 16TH CENTURY—SPREAD OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINE IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND—DEFECTION FROM THE FAITH AND PERSECUTION IN SWEDEN, NORWAY AND DENMARK.

Leo was succeeded by his son Constantine V., surnamed Copronymus. This monarch's advent to power was not for the advantage of the faithful. Inheriting all the prejudices of his unworthy father, he continued the persecution, and even exceeded his parent in hostility to the Catholic faithful. He prohibited the martyrs being honored with the title of saints, and sought to derogate from the honor due to the mother of God, alleging that though worthy of reverence while she bore the Redeemer, she became afterwards only an ordinary person. The few paintings and images that had escaped the hostility of his father, he carefully sought out, and replaced by works of a different character. It was indeed an incongruous and anomalous sight to behold in the temples of God, representations of chariot-races and gladiators, instead of saintly figures of men and women. The latter were indeed, if reason had been consulted, at least as appropriate as the former. But it was not a Christian who gave the one a preference over the other. Copronymus was a compound of Christian and pagan, for

while he assisted at the Christian services, he failed not to invoke the pagan gods, and to seek in the entrails of beasts for enlightenment in his difficulties. That such a monarch should show himself hostile to the veneration of images, is not to be wondered at; but that he should be assisted therein by men holding the rank and dignity of prelates, is humiliating beyond measure, and a most unfavorable commentary on the religion of the time. Indeed it was the aid he received from those in authority, whose voices should be the first in condemning his impiety, that enabled him to succeed to such an extent in his enterprise. Thus in the 13th year of his reign, in compliance with his invitation, 338 bishops met in the vicinity of Constantinople. These after a session of six months drew up a formulary of faith in which they condemned the employment of images for the purpose of devotion, and prohibited their use to the faithful.

On the 20th of August, 754, the decision of the bishops was published in Constantinople and afterwards in all its provinces. The effect was most disastrous. Several holy images that had hitherto escaped the fury of the iconoclasts were now destined to perish. Their possessors in many instances, seeing no other way of avoiding the emperor's tyranny, withdrew from his dominions entirely. But this was not enough to quell the storm. There was still sufficient within his kingdom to provoke his rage. Accordingly in 761 he published an edict worse than anything that had yet appeared. To encourage those under him in carrying out his desires, as well as to gratify his own inveterate hatred against the faithful, he presided in person at their examinations. Proceeding to even further extremes he had a tribunal erected in the basilica of St. Monos and there, surrounded by his imperial court, witnessed with cruel delight the sufferings of those who refused

to conform to his desires. The torments there inflicted on the faithful servants of God were not surpassed by anything perpetrated by the blodiest of the pagan emperors. Persons were beaten with all the ferocity and rage of the cruelest tyrant, until the pavement ran red with the blood of the victims; others had their eyes and tongues torn out; and others again were mutilated most shockingly, having their hands and feet cut off. It was a lamentable spectacle to witness such deeds of blood perpetrated in the name of religion, in a Christian church and by one styling himself a Christian emperor. The groans and shrieks of the victims, the heartless cruelty of the executioners, and the bleeding mutilated bodies of the sufferers harmonized, poorly indeed, with the peaceful, silent, holy character of the place.

At such a time and in the face of such a storm there was required all the zeal and eloquence of the most devoted children of God, to maintain the courage of the faithful and prevent them from yielding to the base desires of their tyrannical ruler. But there were not wanting persons to exercise this charitable office. Of this number, Andrew a monk of the island of Crete, was especially remarkable, and as such, is deserving of mention. With the view of encouraging the faithful to constancy, he left his retirement and came to Constantinople. Presenting himself before the emperor as the monarch was presiding over an examination of the Catholics, he addressed him thus: "Prince, if you believe in Jesus Christ, how do you dare to treat his servants so?" Hardly had the words escaped his lips, when the creatures who surrounded the emperor's throne, fell upon Andrew, hurled him to the ground, discharged upon him a shower of blows, and would have despatched him on the spot only for the emperor's orders to desist. Thinking that flattery or menaces might be able

to conquer the servant of God, Leo first addressed him complacently; but Andrew was not to be won by flattering language, while he was more than a match for his majesty in logic. "Why," inquired he of the emperor, "do you order the images of Christ and his saints to be outraged, since it is held to be a crime and punishable according to law to outrage the image of an emperor?" But the emperor was not open to reason, he listened only to passion, and consequently the holy hermit earned for himself the tyrant's greater displeasure. At first Andrew was scourged and maltreated, but this not producing the desired effect, his jaws were broken, and he was cast into prison. Some days later he was drawn thence, and after being flogged anew, was dragged through the streets by the feet, till he expired in the hands of his executioners.

The defeat that the emperor thus sustained in the heroic perseverance unto the end of the monk Andrew, was increased by a like resistance on the part of the Abbot Henry of Mount Auxence. Knowing the influence and reputation this venerable man had in the community, Constantine endeavored by kindness and flattery to enlist him on his side. An endorsement of the acts of the council, condemnatory of images, was all that the emperor desired. He accordingly solicited the abbot's approval thereof. Henry replied that he did not desire to invoke the malediction of heaven. "I am ready," said he, "to die for the veneration of images. Though I had but a single drop of blood in my body, I would willingly spill it in behalf of that doctrine." This was more than the emperor expected or was willing to hear: officers were accordingly immediately despatched to bring the offender before the royal tribunal. But as it would appear better before the community to condemn him on more reasonable grounds, he was treacherously charged with maintaining a criminal inti-

macy with a lady of rank. This having been triumphantly refuted, the enemies of religion had recourse to a more effectual and better devised plea for incriminating the holy religious. It being prohibited the monks by a royal decree to receive any into their communities without the emperor's permission, a certain youth named George, in collusion with his majesty, and for the purpose of affording his master a plea for persecuting the religious, applied to the abbot to be received amongst the number of the brethren. His entreaties were such that the venerable abbot thought he would be doing wrong before God in refusing him an entrance. He was accordingly received into the community; but immediately after quitted the cloister and reported himself to the emperor, His majesty had now a sufficient excuse for proceeding against the religious. After every effort was made but in vain, to get him to sign the heretical document drawn up by the emperor and his creatures, he was exiled to the island of Proconese near the Hellespont. Following this exercise of injustice, the monks were every-where driven from their monasteries and cast adrift upon society. Nor was this the extent of the emperor's efforts. Taking advantage of the expelled monks destitute condition, while knowing the frailties and corruption of man's nature, Constantine now invited these men to assume the character and position of citizens, to forget their former conditions of life, and to contract matrimonial alliances, taking upon himself to provide for their requirements in case they complied. Many unhappily were weak enough to accord to his desires. Those on the other hand who refused, he resolved upon subjecting to the utmost disgrace. The course he adopted was diabolical in the extreme and well worthy of a child of Belial. On the 21st of August, the day appointed for the annual races, he assembled in the hippodrome all the religious who

refused to comply with his desires, by breaking their solemn religious engagements, and taking to themselves partners in life. Accompanied each by a prostitute drawn from the stews of the capital, he had these venerable men paraded in this disreputable company before the eyes of the assembled thousands, who employed every means in their power to discharge upon them all manner of outrage. Four days later he had the same shameful proceeding renewed, the assembled multitude spitting indignantly upon them, and reviling them in the most opprobrious terms as they passed before them.

It was not the Catholic faithful alone that were made to feel this monster's indignation. Even his own creatures betimes fell under his severe displeasure and suffered accordingly. Of this number the intruder in the patriarchal chair, Constantine, is an example. On the ground of conspiring against the emperor's authority, this miserable prelate was deprived of his position and replaced by another as unworthy, a slave by origin and a eunuch in character, whose early years were spent in attendance on the ladies at court. During a period of 13 months this man's predecessor remained in exile, subject to the most inhuman and barbarous treatment at the hands of the emperor. He was then recalled, only to be subjected to greater indignity and suffering. Being conducted into the cathedral of Santa Sophie, an officer by order of the emperor read aloud in the presence of the people a list of supposed crimes, striking the unhappy prelate a blow in the face at the end of each article or paragraph. Subsequently he was stripped of the sacred vestments and expelled in disgrace. But this was not all. Furthur indignities were still in store for him. On the following day after partly tearing out his beard and hair he was arrayed in a short linen tunic destitute of sleeves and thus more naked than

clad was made to traverse the circus mounted on an ass, the people every-where loading him with opprobrium as he passed. Arrived at the barriers he was cast on the ground, trampled under foot and finally seated on a stone to receive the ralleries and insults of the rabble. Thus dishonored and outraged, this unhappy man was conducted back to prison where he remained for an entire year, when he was beheaded by order of the emperor. It was thus that this enemy of God and man recompensed even his own.

All this time St. Henry, with whom the reader has been made acquainted, remained in exile but not unknown, for by his prayers numerous miracles were preformed in behalf of the afflicted. The emperor learning of this, instead of opening his eyes to the truth it proclaimed, became seriously alarmed at the influence it was securing for its author and hence, to check in its origin what he regarded as the germ of a great Catholic movement, he summoned the holy man to his presence. After vainly endeavoring to induce him to join with the iconoclast party, he had him cast into prison where this noble champion of truth continued to suffer all the horror's of martyrdom till the creatures of the emperor one day, taking courage from an expression dropped by their master, rushed into the cell where the saint was detained and imbrued their hands in his blood. His death was followed by a general persecution of the religion. All Constantinople was turned into a theatre of suffering: everywhere men and women were mutilated for the faith. Some had their eyes plucked out, others their hands cut off and others again were to be seen without ears or noses. It was a frightful butchery nor was it confined merely to the capital but was extended also to the provinces, though perhaps in a milder form and varying to a greater or lesser extent according to the character and prejudices of the officers of justice. Thus the governor of Natolie being of

a strongly anti-Catholic and iconoclastic disposition, assembled the religious under his charge and ordered them under pain of being deprived of their sight, to presently abandon their religious profession and take to themselves wives. For this he was highly commended by the emperor who wrote to him an autograph letter of felicitation thanking him for his zeal in behalf of the truth.

The time was now at hand when the author of all these cruelties was destined to feel the consequences of his iniquitous deeds. In 775 the emperor was attacked by a horrible disease which appeared in the shape of pustules on his legs. Though suffering much he set out on an expedition against the Bulgarians, but before long found that his disease was more serious than he had contemplated. Finding himself rapidly approaching his end, he was struck with remorse for his infamous proceedings and attempted to repair the damage he had done. But time was not at his command, he was summoned to meet his God in judgment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONSTANTINE IS SUCCEEDED BY LEO IV.—THE COUNCIL OF NICE IS HELD —IMPORTANT RESULTS TO THE CHURCH—LEO THE ARMENIAN BECOMES EMPEROR AND PERSECUTES—HE IS ASSASSINATED—THE CHURCH ENJOYS PEACE—THE SARACENS IN SPAIN—COMMENCEMENT OF THE REFORMATION—THE NEW DOCTRINE SPREAD INTO SWITZERLAND—DETACHMENT OF THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES OF EUROPE FROM THE FAITH.

Constantine was succeeded by his son, Leo IV. This prince was not as hostile to the Catholics as his father had been, but his policy was tending in that direction when he was summoned to his account by God. His son a child of five years, became in consequence his successor. The regency was exercised by the child's mother, Irene, a woman of thoroughly Catholic sentiments, but on account of the prevailing feeling of the time unable to do more during the first part of the regency than to protect the faithful. Four years later a favorable opportunity was offered to her of advancing Catholic interests. At that date, 784, the heretical patriarch died and the queen mother had appointed in his stead a fervent Catholic. To remedy the disturbed state of affairs, a general council was deemed necessary. It met at Constantinople on the 17th of August, 786, but being unable to continue its deliberations, on account of the violence offered to the fathers by the iconoclastic party, it was removed to Nice, where it was free from all molestation. In that council the honor due to images was restored, the iconoclastic doctrine was condemned, and the principles of Catholic truth nobly maintained. Most of the bishops in the empire, who were tainted with the heresy

of the time, acknowledged their errors and were received into communion by the council. Peace was thus procured for the Church and lasted for an entire generation, till 815. Meantime the empire was governed by Irene, Nicephorus, Stapracius and Michael Curopolate. From the last named, Leo the Armenian wrested the sovereign power. Like his predecessor, the Isaurian, he was laboring under a hallucination: a prediction had been made to him that if he made war against images he would reign for more than a couple of generations. It was this thirst for power, more probably than anything else, that urged him to enter upon a course of persecution. But, however determined he might have been, his efforts would have proved unavailing, had he not as his predecessor of like name, found willing assistance amongst the members of the clergy. Of those who thus played the part of Judas and betrayed the interests of truth, were John the Grammarian, abbot of the monastery of St. Sugins, Constantine, bishop of Sycle, and others. The former was afterwards made patriarch and employed as principal agent in carrying out the emperor's nefarious designs. At first, Leo dissimulated his faith and showed the accustomed marks of respect for sacred images. But after a brief period, like all hypocritical tyrants, he raised the mask and published an edict making it punishable according to pleasure with imprisonment, exile or death for any one to offer religious veneration to the pictures or images of the saints or angels of God. To strengthen his hands for the terrible contest on which he was entering, he had the Abbot Lecoridon, consecrated bishop and installed in the patriarchal office at Constantinople. This servile creature in compliance with the emperor's orders, assembled a council of equally compliant creatures and by what was termed a canonical decree, condemned the use

of images. The emperor now found himself at liberty to act with greater vigor. Supported by the authority of his heretical prelates, he entered upon a general persecution of the Catholic faithful. Every-where the sacred images were once more subjected to indignity and cast forth from the temples of god. The same fate awaited those preserved in the oratories and private dwellings of the faithful. Even men and women of all classes were subjected to the cruelest sufferings for merely expressing themselves against such shocking proceedings. But it was the clergy who remained faithful to conscience, who were made to suffer the most. Some died under the blows, others were drowned in the sea, while others again, who sought safety in flight, were pursued to their temporary retreats, seized as so many malefactors, and dragged thence to the place of execution. In short, all Constantinople became quickly a shambles where the blood of the best and bravest of the inhabitants, was made to commingle by the tyrannical ruler. Happily this monster's reign was not of long duration: he died by the hand of an assassin, the year after his accession.

Thirteen years of repose followed for the Church, but in 829, the sword of persecution was again unsheathed. This time it was Theophilus, son and successor of Michael II., who assumed the role of tyrant and persecutor. All the atrocities perpetrated during the preceding reigns were renewed under this monarch, and with additional excesses, plates of red-hot iron being applied to the hands and bodies of the victims to induce them to conform to the emperor's will. But the end of all this war against holy truth at length drew to a close. Theophilus died in 842, and with him expired iconoclasm.

From the Byzantian empire the attention of the reader is now invited to the kingdom of Spain, where the Saracens obtained a foothold. The Christians subject to their rule

were very much harassed in divers ways. Their civil and religious rights were largely abridged. It was under Abdarme III. that they suffered the most. At the instigation of one of his counsellors, Bodan, a proselyte from Christianity to Judaism, that monarch required his Christian subjects to abjure their faith and become either Mahometans or Jews. To save themselves, numbers abandoned their country and took refuge in France. This, however, served only to irritate the monarch the more, and caused him to enter upon severer measures against those who remained. Amongst those who at this stage suffered for the faith were the brothers Adolph and John, and the virgins Numilo and Alodie. To these, others were afterwards added and the cruelties continued, till eventually a spirit of zeal was aroused in the breasts of the faithful, and numbers, especially monks, quitted their homes and presented themselves before the authorities confessing the name of Christ. Such proportions did this expression of Christian sentiment assume, that fearing a revolt, the monarch declared his intention of avoiding all further oppression and permitted the faithful to remain in peace. Numbers, however, still continued to present themselves before the authorities and to give evidence to the cause of divine truth, a proceeding which had the effect of having the persecutions renewed. Of the state to which the country was finally reduced by the tyranny of its ruler, the reader will be best able to form an idea from the following exhortation to martyrdom, written by St. Eulogius to his spiritual children at that particular epoch: "You are threatened with being publicly sold and prostituted, but understand that they cannot sully the purity of your soul whatever infamy they may make you suffer. . . . The prisons," continues the same authority, "are filled with clerics who chant the praises of God, while the churches are silent and deserted. Incense no longer ascends there, nor is there any divine service."

The mere attendance at divine service was sufficient in the eyes of the authorities to constitute a grievous offense and to subject the offender to the severest of penalties. Thus at Cordova, two matrons were arrested on a charge of this nature, and suffered the extreme penalty of the law, in common with their husbands. The same measure of punishment was meted out unto others; but so far from deterring the Christians, it only inflamed them the more with the desire of dying for their religion. Becoming conscious of this the authorities resolved upon having no longer recourse to capital punishment, but to imprisonment in cases involving offenses against the memory of the prophet. Strange to consider, this less rigorous treatment had a more injurious and demoralizing effect on the conduct of the faithful. Several fled from their tormentors, others remained but concealed themselves from the enemy, while not a few, unwilling to abandon their homes, shamefully apostatized and embraced the Mahometan faith.

The severity thus exercised against the faithful, was what, in several if not most instances, might have been avoided by the Catholics. Except in cases where the Mahometan faith was attacked the Christians were not, as a rule, proceeded against. Many, accordingly, blamed the over-zeal of their brethren, in voluntarily presenting themselves to suffering and courting the severity of the law. This view of the situation found expression in a council held at Cordova, in which it was resolved, that thenceforth none should voluntarily present themselves before the authorities, and seek suffering and death in that fashion. There were times, however, when the fact of being a Christian was enough to subject one to punishment. This was particularly so, during the reign of Mahomet, the immediate successor of Abdarme III. One of the first acts of this ruler's reign, was the imposing of fines on the faithful, and a refusal to remunerate

his Christian troops. It was not now a question of abstaining from speaking ill of the prophet, but of refusing to embrace his sensual creed, that specially constituted crime. Many unhappily yielded to the monarch's desires. The partial successes thus obtained, caused this cruel ruler to entertain the idea of clearing the country of all but his Mahometan subjects. Accordingly, he ordered the Christian edifices to be levelled with the ground, but before long, he found that he had made a grievous mistake, the whole country being thrown into such a ferment, that he found it necessary to revoke his order. His discomfiture was still greater on finding that many of his co-religionists, as in the preceding reign, being edified and enlightened by the Christians, in their readiness to suffer and die for the faith became converts to the Christian religion. This, and the success of the monk Fandilla, in preaching the divine word, so irritated the king that he resolved upon a general massacre of the faithful and the sale of their wives and children. At the expostulation, however, of his nobles, he revoked the order, and contented himself with the blood of the most obnoxious.

From the reign of the monarch just named, down to the middle of the 16th century, there was no extensive persecution of the Church. At that period, a storm of no ordinary magnitude was gathering whose force was destined to be felt for generations through a large portion of the Christian world. The author of this fearful tempest was an unhappy Augustinian monk. Proud, sensual and daring, Luther's characteristics fitted him admirably for the role of a sectary. Of him it can be truly said, that he sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind. At the time that this daring, reckless man appeared on the stage, Catholic Europe was adorned with numerous religious establishments which the piety and liberality of

the age had erected for the benefit of humanity. A common faith and heaven-born principles of religion bound all in the bonds of Christian charity. It was an edifying spectacle. Brethren every-where lived in harmony, practised the same creed, and looked forward to the same divine reward. A couple of decades, and all this was wholly changed. Enmity took the place of charity, chastity gave way to libertanism, and restraint to lawlessness. Political revolution followed the settled order, and wherever the votaries of innovation came into power they showed their abhorance for everything Catholic by abolishing institutions which centuries had regarded as sacred. Monasteries were destroyed, religious houses torn down, the occupants expelled, and either slain or cast destitute on society. Thus, at the very outset, Muncer, having usurped the civil authority at Mulhausen, showed his antipathy to the ancient religion by pillaging the churches and monasteries, and driving the religious adrift to shift for themselves as best they were able.

From Germany, the new principles were not long in finding their way into Switzerland. At first they did not meet with a favorable reception. In 1526, all the cantons, except Zurich, forbade any change in the faith, and even condemned the new doctrine as erroneous and heretical. In this they were only following the example set by the individual state or canton of Lucerne, two years previous. But, though all thus formally protested against the innovation, and thereby made open profession of the Catholic creed, one, at least, was inoculated with the poisonous doctrine. That was Berne, nor did it require very long to show how it felt on the matter. One year later, in 1527, the civil authorities pronounced publicly, in favor of Zwinglius' teaching. This precipitate change of sentiment makes it appear, that Berne's accord with the other cantons in the

preceding year was merely ostensible and not real. Having resolved upon abolishing the ancient worship, the civil authorities had recourse to arms to aid them in their career of reformers. Placing themselves in the position of those who were duly appointed by God, to direct and govern the destinies of the Church, instead of appealing to the gospel of Christ and the principles of reason to assist them in their efforts, they deemed it more efficacious to establish their principles and convert their opponents by physical force, at the point of the bayonet and the mouth of the cannon. They trusted more to the arm of the flesh than to that of the spirit. Accordingly, having levied a number of troops sufficient for their purpose, they seized the property of the Church, and confiscated it to secular uses. To give a coloring of justice to their proceedings, they convoked an assembly to decide on the principles to be adopted. It was an anomalous thing to witness a council of laics thus arrogating to itself the highest powers of the Church—the right of determining what was to be believed in matters of faith. After a session of several hours, the members came to an unanimous decision in favor of the Zwinglian doctrines, ordered them to be every-where received as the doctrines of Christ, and strictly prohibited any one from speaking or writing against them. By virtue of this erroneous decision, the most sacred rites and dogmas were at once rejected. The ancient liturgy, which had been so long employed by the Church, and which was the outward expression of the people's inward belief, was now no longer to be tolerated. The lofty roofs of those ancient churches, where, generation after generation, Catholics had assembled for the worship of their Maker, were no longer to echo with the old form of Catholic praise. The sacred images, too, which recalled the bright virtues of those they represented, and encouraged the worshippers to walk in

their steps, were in like manner prohibited from further gracing the beauty of those temples of God. In short, the priest and the altar were made to disappear, to be replaced only by the emptiest and most unmeaning of substitutes.

Knowing the weakness and corruption of our nature and how powerful an agent the gratification of passion is in drawing men from their duty to God, the civil authorities now permitted the clergy to marry and required them for this purpose to abandon the monasteries. On the 23rd of February, 1528, instructions were sent to all the communes to adopt the new reform in religion. The inhabitants in many instances resisted, and then followed those shameful proceedings whereby the civil authorities attempted to enforce on the people, at the point of the bayonet, their newly made creed. By virtue of the new orders, the sacred images were every-where ordered to be demolished, the altars to be overturned, and the divine sacrifice of the mass abolished. Under pain of imprisonment no ecclesiastic was at liberty to perform the holy sacrifice, while even the harboring of a priest was made as heinous an offense as harboring an outlaw. To evade the force of these tyrannical enactments, many residing on the borders of the neighboring cantons, where the old faith still endured, used to cross the line to attend the divine mysteries. But this coming to the knowledge of the authorities, it was followed by an ordinance strictly prohibiting the custom. For three years this horrible state of affairs continued to dishonor the country and the men who were its authors. Meantime the most reprehensible acts of violence were every-where perpetrated with impunity. The worst passions were aroused and found expression in the excesses of the so-called reformers and in the name of religion. Discord, hatred, and enmity were generated in the breasts of many, while neither the ties of

kindred or family were sufficient to allay the wild spirit of disorder and prevent it from perpetrating the most heinous of crimes under the sanction of the law. Armed bodies of men burst into the churches, overturned the sacred images, destroyed the noble paintings, and seized and appropriated whatever of value they could apply to their own use or convert into specie by sale. In fact the iconoclastic excesses of the Byzantian emperors were renewed in all their most reprehensible features. Not only did painting and statuary suffer at the hands of these infuriated zealots, but even music, that most refining and cultivating of the Church's auxiliaries in reforming the wicked and leading them to God, suffered equally at the hands of these men. In short, in their blind and intolerant rage, these would-be reformers manifested the spirit by which they were led.

But with an effrontery equivalent to their stupidity and a contradiction in keeping with their antipathy to all that was Catholic, while the words of liberty were ever on their lips, bigotry and intolerance were ever present in their acts. They preached, indeed, liberty of conscience, but by a strange perversion of mind they prohibited the Catholic faithful from enjoying the same.

Urged on by Zwinglius, the Zwinglians attempted to subject to their authority the still Catholic cantons. To save themselves from the tyranny of the apostates, the five Catholic cantons formed an alliance with the archduke of Austria and were thus enabled to set their tormentors at defiance. But it was not without a struggle that the reformers relinquished their project. On the 7th of June, 1529, they attacked and took the town of Cappel, but were immediately dislodged and necessitated to retire. It was a lamentable spectacle to witness, a whole nation thus thrown into war by the violence of one man. In 1531, five other cantons fol-

lowed those mentioned, and formed an alliance for self-preservation. They did not confine themselves to the defensive, but relying upon their ability and the justice of their cause, they carried the war into the enemy's camp and taught him a practical and salutary lesson. The heretical army was completely discomfited, and left on the field several banners and cannon and all the munitions of war. Fifteen of their preachers, amongst whom was their leader Zwinglius, was in the number of the slain. The heretics, however, were not yet wholly subdued; they still entertained the idea of being able to conquer the Catholics. To this end they hazarded another engagement on the 20th of the same month; but were again subjected to defeat. Thus masters of the situation, the Catholics might have availed themselves of their position and have pushed their conquest to the utter destruction of their heretical neighbors, had they been so disposed; but vengeance was not their object. Toleration for themselves and others was all they aimed at, and, this obtained, they were willing to lay down their arms. Once before they expressed the terms on which they would agree to a cessation of hostilities, and now for the second time they made known their desires. The conditions were of the most reasonable kind. It was stipulated in the first instance that the five Catholic cantons should be left in the free exercise of their religious belief, that the same liberty should be conceded to the Protestants, and that, wherever the novelties in doctrine had been established by violence, the people should be at liberty to accept or reject them by vote. The acceptance of the last article of the covenant would have virtually undone all that had been effected by the so-called apostles of freedom, for the people, left to themselves, would have speedily returned to the faith of their fathers. The heretics accordingly rejected the third article of the treaty, proving thereby that their boasted principle of freedom

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and liberty of conscience was only an imaginary good—a blessing to be enjoyed by themselves, but denied to their neighbors. Learning from this the true dispositions of their adversaries, the Catholics pushed their advantage and marched upon Zurich, driving the heretical army everywhere before them. Having arrived near the capital, the unbelievers found themselves obliged to accept the conditions. In addition, it was stipulated that the reformers should pay all the expenses of the war and should repair at their own cost all the damage done by their followers to the churches and monasteries. Shortly afterwards, the Bernese were forced to accept like conditions. As an immediate result of the third article of the treaty, numbers returned to the ancient faith, the religious re-entered their convents, and the people in very considerable numbers were desirous of re-establishing the Catholic faith. But the noxious principles had already accomplished their evil work. Many had fallen never to rise, and so, the unbelievers proving too powerful, Protestantism became the religion of the apostate cantons.

While the events noted above were happening in Switzerland, occurrences of a like unpleasant nature were taking place in the northern countries of Europe. In 1520, Christian, surnamed the cruel, succeeded to the throne of Denmark. In politics as well as religion, he showed himself the tyrant from the commencement of his reign. Numbers, amongst whom were persons of the highest condition of life, were cruelly massacred by his orders on the most frivolous grounds. In religious matters it could not be expected that he would be more amenable to law. Indeed from the outset, he showed how he felt on such matters, for in the same year that he was crowned, he summoned to Copenhagen and appointed to a charge in that capital, one of the reformed divines. During the following year he dictated to the

university the course it was to adopt in regard to the novelties of the hour and strictly forbade any condemnation of Luther or his doctrines. This was only the commencement of still greater encroachments on the liberties of the Church. It was followed by a still more oppressive and dangerous measure—a prohibition disqualifying the celibate clergy from possessing any ecclesiastical property. To this was added an order for the erection of an ecclesiastical tribunal of which the king or his deputy was to be judge, thereby preventing a recurrence in case of dispute to the centre of Catholic unity. These encroachments on the rights and liberties of the Church, alienated from him the affection and loyalty of the clergy who, joining with the outraged nobles, formed a party in the state and declared the monarch dethroned. The wretched tyrant, as cowardly and base as he was cruel, endeavored by submission to retain his position; but the nobles were inexorable and he had to fly as a fugitive from the land he had so shamefully misgoverned. He was succeeded by his uncle the duke of Schleswig and Holstein, a man in every way as hostile to the interests of divine truth, but who for the moment found it a necessity to dissemble his intentions. A Luthern at heart, he appointed shortly after his coming to the throne, a Luthern monk as chaplain to his court. It needed no further evidence to demonstrate how his majesty felt on the subject of religion. The Catholics immediately saw what they had to expect, nor were matters long in coming to a crisis. In the following year, 1527, the new king announced to his subject that, in consequence of numerous abuses existing in the Church, it was his good will and pleasure that, until a general council could meet, the new and the old religion should be equally protected and their freedom of action ensured. This was an artful way of patronizing untruth and protecting the heretical doctrines. At the same time and in the same assembly it was made

known to the community that, henceforth, the bishops of the Catholic Church should receive their investiture from the king and not from the sovereign pontiff, that ecclesiastical property was subject to the law of the state, and that the clergy were at liberty to marry.

Six years later, the final blow was struck by the son and successor of this monarch, Christian III. That monarch deprived of their sees and cast into prison, all the bishops who refused to accept the new regime. As in England, later on, those who aided the king in this war against the liberties of the faithful were remunerated out of the confiscated ecclesiastical property.

While these occurrences were happening in Denmark, equally deplorable changes were taking place in Sweden and Norway. In the latter country, Gustavus Vasa, at first administrator and afterwards king, played the chief role of reformer. Desirous of rendering the crown hereditary in his family and deeming the new creed more favorable to his pretentions in this regard than the ancient faith he, accordingly, from motives of political interest, favored the former in preference to the latter. To this end he had appointed to some of the first offices of state, members of the Lutheran profession; but the results were not of the precipitate character that his majesty contemplated. The people did not, to gratify the desire of their sovereign, immediately abandon the faith of their forefathers. More than the appointment of a Lutheran chancellor and Lutheran professors to the state university, was evidently needed to accomplish the projected alteration in religion. What that particular policy was, the monarch did not leave the country very long in doubt about. Having gained over to his view some of the religious, he gave orders for a general conference of Lutherans on the one side and Catholics on the other, the united assembly to be presided over in per-

son by himself as supreme judge and arbiter in the matters to be discussed. It was not difficult to determine the judgment that was about to be rendered. The faithful immediately took the alarm and a general rising hostile to the interests of the throne was hourly expected. To allay the commotion, the tyrant found it convenient to temporize for the moment. Though a heretic at heart, he had the hypocrisy to show himself ostensibly as a Catholic, offering no opposition to the jubilee which was then being preached in the country. But though thus apparently adhering to the faith, he allowed no opportunity to pass that might serve to weaken it in the minds of his subjects. Thus to the great scandal and disedification of the faithful, he publicly assisted at the marriage of the court preacher, Olaüs Petri. The consequence of this deplorable scandal was most injurious to religion: it had the worst effect upon the lives of others, and before long several male and female religious abandoned their holy profession, returned to a secular life and engaged in the married state. The king's hands were thus strengthened by the very persons whose duty it was to oppose him most sternly, and a pretext was afforded him of proceeding with rigor against the conventual clergy. He did not hesitate to embrace the opportunity, and the first to feel the weight of his authority were the monks of Gripsholm, who were driven from their convent and deprived of their goods. In these acts of violence, the country was not with the king. On the contrary the people were ready to risk their lives in defense of their clergy. "We will keep our monks," said the inhabitants of Upland to the king; "and we will maintain them and we will above all things preserve the Catholic faith which you are endeavouring to deprive us of." This open, determined resolution on the part of a considerable number of the inhabitants, compelled the tyrant to reflect, and caused him

for the moment to modify the violence with which he was governing. But he was none the less determined upon detaching the country from the centre of Catholic unity. To deprive the flock of its shepherd is to scatter it: this the tyrant was aware of and he did not long hesitate in the course he should adopt. On the plea of negotiating a royal marriage, he dispensed for the time being with the services of the primate whom he sent into Poland, but never permitted to return. The absence of the chief at so critical a moment was the cause of the greatest embarrassment and misfortune to the Church. The tyrant had then none to oppose him with practical effect. Thus deprived of their chief and counsellor, the people were now taught a lesson of terror in the execution of the archbishop of Upsal and the bishop of Vesteras, on the ground of sedition. The country, however, was still Catholic at heart, and it required more than the exile and death of some of the hierarchy to detach it from the faith. To obtain supreme control over the Church and all ecclesiastical affairs, was needed in order to establish the new heresy. But this could be obtained only through parliament, nor was that body to be gained over but by diplomacy. Accordingly in the diet of 1527, the king made a bid for the sympathy of the members. His object was by an apparent display of magnanimity of purpose to reconcile the disaffected and secure their co-operation. Inasmuch then as his intentions were misrepresented and that he could not carry out the reforms he desired, he begged to be relieved from the trust that the nation had reposed in him! The motives that dictated this offer were concealed in the apparent magnanimity thereof. The king's proposition produced the intended result; it gained him the sympathy of his opponents, and in the general admiration at so noble an offer, an unlimited control was granted to him by parliament, over civil and

ecclesiastical affairs. The disposal of the revenues of the Church was thus placed at the will of the king and to him belonged the regulation of the salaries of the clergy and the bishops. To the nobles, too, was conceded the right of reclaiming the grants made by their ancestors in behalf of religion. By these iniquitous acts, the king became virtual head of the Church with unlimited power to confiscate at his pleasure what the piety and liberality of the faithful had during centuries bestowed for the services of religion. The result was most destructive to the faith. Vested with these powers, the tyrant immediately suppressed the religious communities to the number of thirty, sharing with his nobles the ill-gotten proceeds. A little later, in 1529, he held an ecclesiastical court in which, as supreme arbiter he abolished many of the ceremonies appertaining to divine worship. Nor was his ambition gratified wholly until he succeeded in having the sovereignty of the nation and the supremacy of religion vested in himself and his descendants. Thus made absolute ruler, this tyrant succeeded by violence in severing his country from her allegiance to Rome.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FAITH INTRODUCED INTO JAPAN—NUMEROUS CONVERSIONS—THE BONZES TAKE ALARM—THEY PREJUDICE THE KING'S MIND—HE ISSUES AN EDICT BANISHING THE MISSIONARIES AND PROSCRIBING THE RELIGION—EIGHT CHRISTIANS BURNED ALIVE—TERRIBLE CRUELTIES OF THE PERSECUTORS—SIXTY-TWO OF THE FAITHFUL MARTYRED AT NAGASAKI.

From the consideration of the persecution of the faithful in Germany, Switzerland and the northern countries of Europe, as detailed in the preceding chapter, the reader's attention is now invited to what was being done about the same period by the enemies of religion in the distant regions of the East, for at that date the enemy of mankind endeavored to storm the fortress of divine truth from different quarters.

Japan became first known to Europeans toward the middle of the 16th century. Up to 1549, when St. Francis Xavier entered the country, the gospel of divine truth had never been preached there. As in the Indies, the efforts of the saint met with the most flattering success. By the time he quitted that kingdom with the view of preaching the gospel in the still more populous empire of China, there was then in Japan a Catholic population of 200,000 souls. Till then the religion had met with no serious impediments. Jealousy had not yet been aroused, nor was there any indication that opposition would be readily encountered. The tranquillity, however, thus far enjoyed was no assurance that the future would be as favorable as the past had been. Indeed if any thing, it was an indica-

tion of the storm that was certain to follow, for the powers of darkness could not be expected to look on with indifference while their principal strongholds, were being seriously menaced. Such in fact proved to be the case; for as numbers continued to be enrolled under the banner of Christ, a fierce spirit of opposition was enkindled in the breasts of the teachers of error. In 1562, the prince of Omera and thirty of his principal nobles were received into the Church: this, in addition to the already numerous instances of conversion amongst the less notable of the kingdom, evoked a strong spirit of hostility in the minds of the ungodly. Accordingly in 1564, the emperor ordered an examination of the principal tenets of the Christian religion. For this office two of the principal bonzes were chosen. On their report depended the toleration or suppression of the faith. It pleased the Almighty to enlighten them in the knowledge of the truth: they renounced their idolatrous worship; embraced the Christian faith; and became in turn ardent propagators of divine truth. The conversion of the bonzes and the marvelous accounts that had reached his majesty regarding the new creed caused him to seek for instruction therein. Two missionaries were accordingly admitted at court, and so satisfied was the king with the doctrine proposed that he determined embracing it. But before putting his resolution into effect, a revolution occurring at that critical moment caused the king the loss of his throne and life. Under the new regime, things were considerably altered: the faithful were no longer permitted the same liberty of worship as before. The privilege given during the preceding reign of preaching the gospel every-where through the kingdom, was now revoked. The idolators were highly rejoiced at this order, especially as the permission granted to the missionaries by the late ruler was

stigmatized in the strongest terms. The local governors were, in consequence, at liberty to show their detestation of the new faith, nor were they slow in this, though ostensibly holding the most friendly relations with the Portugese government. Thus under the plea of being spies, but in reality on account of their being Christians, the Dai-Mio of the province of Firando put four of the faithful to death. But the enemies of religion did not enjoy their triumph very long. Political changes having placed another monarch on the throne, the interdict against the faith was removed and the missionaries were again at liberty to resume their labors and preach through the country. In consequence, the religion made considerable progress again, especially in the province of Gotto, where the heir-apparent to the throne and his consort were converted to the faith. In one sense this was most advantageous to the Church, but in another most disastrous. The king, fearing a civil war on account of the change made in religion by his son, and the loss to himself of the crown, was induced through motives of policy to proscribe the Christian faith. But the parental severity in no way altered the son's resolution. He had embraced the truth and was resolved to die in its defense. While the king hesitated as to how he should act towards the child, one of the missionary fathers sought an interview and relieved him from his embarrassment by manifesting his readiness to die if necessary for the faith in order to appease the idolators. "Put me to death," said the generous-minded priest, "and you shall appease the bonzes, while I shall gain the kingdom of heaven." His noble offer made a deep impression on the king: he recalled the prince whom he had banished, and Christianity was no more proscribed during his reign.

Four and twenty years had now elapsed since St. Francis landed in Japan. In the interim the faith was planted all

over the country: even some of the princes, as we have seen had embraced the divine truth. But it was reserved for the year 1576, to witness the conversion of the people upon a still larger scale. At that date the Dai-Mio of Arima acknowledged the claims of Christianity and submitted thereto, being followed in his act by 20,000 of his subjects. Unhappily his reign was only of short duration. He died in the following year and was succeeded by his son, who did all in his power to undo what his father had done. He banished the missionaries, demolished the churches, and proscribed the religion. His efforts, however, were to a considerable extent entirely unavailing, owing to the admirable dispositions of the people and clergy who showed themselves ready to die for the faith. When threatened with the king's displeasure, the superior of the missions returned this dignified and truly Christian answer to his majesty: "Tell the king," said he, "that our only regret is that we have but a single life to give for so glorious a cause." These noble and generous sentiments were shared in by the Christians at large and served to prevent a general massacre. From the death of the Dai-Mio of Arima, in 1577, till the accession of Cambacundono in 1587, the missionaries were alternately between hope and fear. But at that date a storm was gathering which in the decrees of divine providence was destined to overturn the most of what had been established up to that time. Cambacundono was prejudiced against the religion for several reasons. He was made to believe that the missionaries' presence in the country was the cause of continual danger; that they had come with the view of preparing the way for their European brethren's occupation and conquest of the kingdom. His majesty was further incensed in consequence of being repulsed by some native virgins upon whose chastity he had made an attempt. But perhaps

the principal cause was the assurance given him by the bonzes that he could not be enrolled amongst the number of the gods unless he banished the Christian religion from his empire. This violently embittered him against the missionaries and their creed, and he resolved upon eradicating the faith from his dominions. A decree of banishment was accordingly issued against the clergy and they were commanded under pain of death to presently quit the kingdom. In obedience to the royal commands, 120 of the Fathers withdrew for the time to the dominions of the neighboring princes. Meantime, the royal troops were despatched through the country with orders to destroy the Christian places of worship. The demolition of these, however, did not mean the destruction of the religion, and before long the king was convinced that it required more than he had anticipated to root the faith out of the land.

Hitherto the motives for persecuting the missionaries were chiefly religious, but now they assumed more of a political than a religious character. Being made to believe that the preachers of the divine word were more political agents than religious intruders, the king lost all control over himself and resolved upon driving the missionaries, at every hazard, from his kingdom. This view of the character and object of these men, thus formed by the king, was owing entirely to imprudence on the part of a Portuguese captain. There being then no international treaty of commerce between that country and Europe, all western merchandise brought into Japanese waters was liable to be seized by the government and confiscated to the use of the state. In fact an instance of that kind happened to the Portuguese captain to whom I have referred. Desirous of saving his cargo from the rapacity of the government officials, he commenced extolling the greatness

and riches of his country, with the view of intimidating the authorities. When asked how such extensive possessions and riches were obtained, he replied by means of the missionaries, who, by converting the natives wherever they went, rendered them docile to their desires and thus opened the way to their countrymen for conquest. At this the monarch took the alarm, and bound himself by oath not to leave a priest in any part of his dominions. Six Franciscan religious were amongst the first arrested, and were ordered to be executed. The sentence pronounced against them was that they should have their ears and noses cut off, that thus mutilated they should be publicly paraded as objects of scorn through the principal cities of the kingdom, and finally be executed. "It is my pleasure," said the monarch, "that after being exposed to the derision of the multitude, they be finally crucified at Nagasaki." To these, twenty members of the laity were subsequently added, and on the fifth of February 1597, the six and twenty victims were led out to execution. They were crucified on one of the hills near the town of Nagasaki. Thirty years later these martyrs were enrolled amongst the number of the saints by Urban VIII. The tyrant now learning that several Jesuits were still in his dominions, took measures to have them expelled. Thus this wicked ruler continued to persecute this infant Church till the following year, when God called him to an account for his misdeeds.

At this juncture a war undertaken against Corea being ended, the troops returned, amongst whom were several Christians, and as the policy of the late monarch was disapproved of by his successor, the religion became again flourishing in the kingdom. Missionaries of various Orders —Jesuit, Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian—taking advantage of the tranquil state of affairs, and encouraged

by the admirable dispositions shown by the people in embracing the faith, now flocked into the country and extended the religion more largely than ever. Still local persecutions continued for a time. The prince of Figo being most hostile to Christianity, determined upon executing all of his nobles who should refuse to worship the idols. Instead of succeeding in destroying the faith in this manner, he found that he was only adding to the number of the believers. But his failure did not prevent others from adopting a like policy. In 1600, an edict was issued by the Seaugoon or chief monarch, proscribing the Christian religion, and calling on all Japanese to abandon it immediately. This document was published at Osaka, but never received a strict application. It was only carried out to the letter in cases where the subordinate authorities were personally hostile to the faithful. Nor were there wanting instances of this nature. Thus in 1607, an officer of the Dai-Mio of Satzuma, was put to death for the faith. This officer's confession of Christ was the more to be admired on account of the circumstances immediately connected therewith. Indeed his conversion and constancy in suffering, reminds one very forcibly of the primitive martyrs, who being instantaneously illumined by God's divine grace, and sustained by his all-powerful aid, professed their belief in the Christian religion, and died in its behalf. Up to the date of his martyrdom, this generous soldier of Christ had been a pagan, but moved by the spirit of God, he now sought to be enrolled amongst the number of the true believers. Aware of the penalty attached to conversion in the case of the military, which was death, the missionary hesitated for a time in complying with this generous soldier's request. Finally, yielding to his entreaties, he received him into the Church. The knowledge of this coming to the cognizance of the prince, that potentate

ordered the newly baptized to abjure, under penalty of death, his holy faith. The cruel order in no way alarmed the officer, it only caused him greater spiritual joy. Having obtained a rosary and crucifix, he repaired to his master's presence, and unhesitatingly declared his inability to renounce his religion, and, at the same time, his readiness to die therefor. Thereupon he was ordered to be executed. As he bared his neck to receive the fatal blow, he said aloud: "Give me a temporal death that I may obtain eternal life." This happened in 1607. On the following year four others with two children were martyred for a like reason. What was most touching in their execution were the admirable dispositions of the little ones, who shrunk not from the terrible ordeal, but showed as much firmness as could be expected from persons of riper years. Thomas, a twelve-year-old boy, hearing that his presence was required, and that the soldiers were in search of him, to put him to death, arrayed himself in his best attire and came forth to meet his fate. His execution was ended by the time the other, a child of seven years, arrived. The martyred remains of his little brother and beloved parent, in no way disconcerted the little hero. With a firmness and generosity worthy of the staunchest soldier of Christ, he dropped on his knees, and joining his hands, presented his head to the executioner. The simplicity, firmness, and faith displayed in the act, made a wonderful impression on the multitude. Cries of sympathy escaped the lips of all, and the executioner, wholly unmanned, cast his sword on the ground and fled. Two others in succession found themselves unable to perform the bloody deed; but at last a Corean slave was procured, who struck the fatal blow, and severed the youthful martyr's head from his body.

In 1612, the English, attracted by the success of the

Dutch, arrived for the first time in the country. The Hollanders had preceded them by three years; they had been well received and had obtained from the Japanese government a port on the island of Firando. The success obtained by the missionaries and the apprehension lest their influence might not eventually assume a political aspect, awakened the suspicions of the Mikado, and made him look with distrust upon the teachers of the new faith. These apprehensions, however unjust, were not in any manner diminished, but rather increased by the English and Dutch heretics, whose antipathy to Catholicism was then at its utmost. Yielding thus to his own ungrounded suspicions, the monarch exiled several of his principal nobility for refusing to adore the gods of the country. This led him to further severity and cruelty. Two of his brothers, who had embraced Christianity, he had secretly executed. A little later, eight other Christians were condemned by his orders to be burned alive. Instead of alarming the faithful and preventing them from practising their religion, this served only to arouse their zeal and call forth their faith. Putting aside accordingly all apprehension as to how his majesty might feel and forgetting everthing but the interests of religion, a vast number of Christians hastened to the royal presence and declared themselves ready to die, even by fire if necessitated, rather than abandon the faith. The scene was a touching and impressive one,and became the occasion of the conversion even of some of the nobility at court. The order for the execution of the confessors, however, was not revoked: the date appointed for this remained the same as before—the 7th of October, 1613. On that day was witnessed a spectacle unique in the annals of Church history and most edifying in its character. While the eight martyrs were led out to execution, they were followed by a vast multitude of

the faithful, numbering several thousand, many bearing torches, and observing the most perfect decorum. It was a grand and impressive scene and could not have failed in being productive of the happiest results. Arrived at the place of execution, the vast multitude arranged itself around the victims. The fervor of the people was still further increased on seeing the martyrs hastening to embrace the stakes to which they were to be tied. At this juncture, one of the victims ascended a platform and spoke as follows: "You see, brethren, what courage the faith gives to feeble creatures. These terrible preparations. which you witness, far from terrifying, only fill us, with joy. In the midst of the flames, I hope, God aiding, that this joy will be increased." He continued thus till the plaudits of the people drowned his voice, when he descended and offered himself a victim to the executioner. All being attached to the stakes, the pyres were fired and the martyrs' sufferings began. It would be difficult to say which was more imposing and impressive, the tranquillity of the sufferers or the faith of the spectators. In the one instance, there was an actual endurance for Christ's sake of the most terrible torments, and on the other hand an implied, or rather open declaration of being ready to undergo the same if needed. The sentiments with which the glorious martyrs were animated were very clearly brought out during their sufferings. One of the number, a youth named James, after the fire had burned his hands and left him free to escape, instead of rushing from the flames, as nature would have prompted, fled rather to his mother's side, and embracing his beloved parent, declared his readiness to die in her company. It was a touching scene to witness the dying mother employing her remaining strength in encouraging her beloved child to accomplish the glorious sacrifice. Her words were not

in vain, for the child clung to its burning parent until the fire had consumed the latter's bands, when both sank together into the flames, a most pleasing holocaust to the Almighty.

Still more affecting was the conduct of this boy's sister, a maiden of 18 years. Though almost half consumed, yet with sufficient strength to make a final effort, taking a quantity of the living embers that lay around her she deliberately placed them in the form of a crown on her head, in evidence of that crown which she felt sure would be given her by God for the testimony thus rendered by her to divine truth. When the fire had done its work the Christians carefully removed the sacred remains and preserved them as their richest treasure.

The damage hitherto done to religion came from without; it was perpetrated by the unbelievers and stimulated by the heretics. In this respect the future was different from the past. The injury done to the Church in this latter instance came from within, rather than from without. In 1614, the country being without a bishop, grave disputes unhappily arose amongst the ecclesiastics regarding the government of the faithful in that kingdom. Nor was it until a pontifical bull was issued by Rome that the scandalous rivalry was brought to a close. The Christians indeed had an abundance of matters to attend to, independent of these internal dissentions. But such was the fate of this land that it was destined to suffer as well from its own as from the unbelievers Hence, while the emperor was framing a decree for the banishment of the missionaries, these very men who had come for evangelizing the country were fiercely contending for precedency. The native Christians on the other hand were now commanded, under pain of being burned alive, to renounce the faith, while at the same time an edict for the demolition of the

churches was issued by his majesty. To impress the people with the stern character of the edict and the inutility of attempting to avoid its force, the people were informed that in case of disobedience they had better prepare at once for death. The expression employed in the royal edict was that, "the recalcitrant should prepare their own stakes," an intimation that they were to be burned alive. The people understood the official documents thoroughly, and then took place one of those novel and touching episodes which one would vainly look for in history. The morning immediately succeeding the royal proclamation the pagans were astonished to see erected before every Christian dwelling as many stakes as there were inhabitants within. Indeed so heartily did all enter into this public declaration of their holy profession that even those whose poverty was great, sold some of their wearing apparel to purchase their stakes. This unanimity of sentiment was more than the enemies of religion had anticipated. To slay so many of the subjects of the empire was what the most unscrupulous would shrink from. At the same time the edict of the emperor was in some measure to be accomplished and the constancy of the faithful put to the test. Accordingly seven and twenty of the Christians were arrested without regard to age or sex. Being stripped naked, they were enclosed each in a sack and exposed during four and twenty hours to the intense cold of winter. Meantime the bonzes continued exhorting them to yield to the emperor's desires and to abandon the Christian religion. As none of the noble-hearted confessors showed any sign of apostasy, they were finally banished in company with numerous others to a desert part of the country and there continued to be joined by their brethren until that place became a second Thebais.

Other and far more dangerous methods were afterwards

employed to shake the constancy of the faithful. The sword and the stake were not half as effectual to unnerve the disciples of Christ as the pleasures of sense. This the enemy of mankind was aware of, when he suggested to his servants to put to test the virtue of the female religious. A dozen of the handsomest being accordingly arrested at Meyako, were sent into a house of debauchery. If their enemies could not pervert them from religion, they could at least have the infernal delight of having violated their chastity. But in this they were entirely defeated. God took upon himself the guardianship of his chaste spouses, and inspired them with the idea of disfiguring their bodies, so that when their lacivious admirers sought their embrace, finding them so horribly mutilated, they fled in affright from the terrible spectacle. This, however, was not always resorted to for the preservation of virtue, for in other instances, rather than imperil their wives and their daughters, husbands and fathers shamefully apostatized. Indeed so effective was this as a means in causing apostasy that the prince of Arma resolved upon employing no other than the prostitution of mothers and daughters. As soon as he had publicly avowed this infernal design, the whole Christian community was stricken with alarm, such as it had never experienced before. In the presence of so dreadful an alternative, banishment, the sword, and fire were merely trifles. The whole Christian community accordingly joined in a petition, begging the tyrant to employ against them any punishment he pleased, banishment, confiscation, the cross, the sword, any thing, save the horrible ordeal of subjecting their females to the terrible alternative of apostasy or the gratification of the passions of the lecherous unbelievers. The prayers of the poor suppliants were happily heard. The brutal tyrant grew ashamed of his infamous proposal and confined himself to banishing the

faithful. Great numbers were consequently immediately exiled from the country. Seventy-three Jesuits were banished to Macao, while twenty-three other Fathers of the same Society, together with members of the Orders of St. Dominic and St. Augustine, were sent to the Philippine Islands. Still the country was not wholly deprived of missionaries. Some escaped the vigilance of the authorities, while of those who were banished some found the means of secretly returning. It was, however, exceedingly difficult for them to escape observation, and almost as difficult for the native believers to escape being discovered. For a body of military scoured the country in every direction, seeking the faithful wherever they were to be found. When they arrived in any locality, the commander erected a tribunal, and summoned the Christians to abandon their faith. Those who refused, he subjected to every indignity and torture. Casting them on the ground, he had them beaten with clubs until they almost expired. Some, indeed, died under the blows, when their bodies were cut into pieces and cast as a prey to the birds and the beasts. In numerous instances the Christians exhibited the most admirable fortitude and contempt of their sufferings. Even unsought, they at times came forward to give evidence to divine truth, fully aware of the torments that awaited them. Thus at Cochintra, sixty of the faithful presented themselves before the authorities, bringing with them in some instances the cords that might be needed to tie them to the stakes. This undaunted defiance of the tyrant's authority, enraged him to an unlimited extent, and caused him to exercise on his victims all the tortures of which he was master. Every manner of instrument, capable of inflicting suffering, was called into requisition. The victims were first elevated in the air by means of a pulley, their hands firmly tied behind their backs, and then violently dashed on the ground. The

result was the fracture of bones, and internal injuries. In some instances the shock was so great that the blood burst through the eyes, mouth, and nostrils. Failing thus to cause their apostasy, they were next stripped of their garments and, being pricked all over with pointed instruments, were again hoisted high over the heads of the multitude, and again dashed violently on the ground, when they were trampled under foot by their tormentors. Their tortures were not still at an end: more exquisite suffering still remained to be tried in their case. By order of the tyrant they were now stretched on the ground face downwards, and weights of several hundred pounds placed on their loins, when by means of pullies with ropes attached to their hands and feet, they were elevated in the air and thus subjected to a torture of which it would be difficult to form an idea, The enormous weights pressing upon their bodies, stretched the members to their utmost tension, and dislocated the several parts. When the victims swooned, the torture was suspended until consciousness returned, when an additional torment was had recourse to. That consisted of breaking their limbs between pointed instruments. The fingers and toes were next cut off in succession, and as the mutilated champions thus lay bleeding and broken, they were branded in derision with a red, hot iron on the forehead. In acting thus the tyrant was unconscious that he was crowning his victims with the final mark of glory. So indeed did these champions regard this torture, and exulted accordingly therein—a circumstance which set their tormentors beside themselves with rage. But what further sufferings one might fairly ask could the malice of man subject his unhappy victims to? Rage, however, is fertile in inventing means of torture. It was so in this case. Their bodies were still capable of additional torture; there were yet some parts that had not been man-

gled. In some instances the eyes of the victims had been forced from their sockets, by reason of the unnatural position their bodies were made to assume when raised aloft in the air. But in other instances, these members though blood-shot and languid, yet occupied their natural position. On these then the tyrant's rage found a part whereon to exercise additional cruelty. The eyes of all were, accordingly, ordered to be dug of out their sockets and their teeth to be smashed in their jaws. In fine every effort that malice or ingenuity could suggest, having been tried but in vain, to shake their constancy, eighteen of the victims were decapitated, and the remainder houghed and dismissed. These terrible, bloody scenes, which were enough to make the stoutest hearts tremble with fear, were not confined to one part of the country, but were extended over several districts. Yet under so severe an ordeal not an individual case of apostasy has been recorded.*

Seeing that the faithful could not be deprived of their faith, the tyrant now directed his attention mainly to the missionaries, making it a capital offense for any one even to harbor a priest. Not to expose the faithful to so heavy a penalty, the clergy deemed it their duty to retire for the moment into the mountains and forests, where they would be comparatively secure from the agents of the law and no longer an occasion of suffering and penalty to others.

The death of the emperor at this period, 1616, instead of lightening the burdens and decreasing the sufferings of the Christians, only added thereto. In his dying moments, he strictly charged his son and heir to cease not till he had wholly exterminated the Christian community, and especially their European teachers. There were then in Japan over fifty priests and a considerable number of catechists. Being especial objects of the emperor's displeasure, it was difficult

* Belouino, vol. 8., p. 196.

for these to escape detection. The Jesuits were comparatively free from such danger, for they had adopted the costume of the country and were thus enabled to screen themselves with greater facility. Their brethren of other communities followed in some instances their cautious example, but in others, heedless of the consequences and influenced solely by the desire of bearing testimony to divine truth, they appeared publicly in the habits of their Orders, a course which led immediately to their arrest and death. In this manner, a Franciscan and a Dominican father laid down their lives. Two years had now elapsed since the death of the late emperor. Meantime his son and successor had walked steadily in his footprints, never departing from the promise made to his dying parent of using all the efforts in his power to exterminate Christianity from the country. Still the religion existed in the land, nor did it appear to the tyrant that there was any way of effecting his purpose, but by taking a census of the Christians and making it an alternative for them to abjure their religion, or suffer the penalty of death. The governor of Nagasaki, accordingly, obtained orders to take an inventory of all the faithful. This cruel monster commenced his career by burning alive all that were incarcerated in the prisons subject to his immediate authority. Amongst these were several children and a female upon the point of giving birth to an infant. But neither age, nor sex, nor condition was any consideration with so cruel a man. In times of such violence, it was hardly to be expected that all would be faithful to their holy profession. It might, however, be hoped that the ranks of the ministry would be free from apostasy, but such, unhappily, was not the case. Thomas Araqui, a Japanese priest, was of the number of those who fell. His fall was the more pernicious, as he informed on his brother priests, and supplied the governor with a list of the missionaries, and of the

faithful who afforded them hospitality. Several in consequence were arrested and suffered death for the faith. Amongst these were the native-born priests Isceda Pinto, and Leonard Kimara. The admirable fortitude of these ministers of the divine word and their readiness to die for religion repaired in some measure the scandal occasioned by their apostate co-religious and kinsman. Such was their fervor and holy desires, that while confined in prison, they became the apostles of truth to their keepers, the latter, Father Kimara, having baptized as many as three and twenty of the idolatrous guards. When informed that the pyre was ready and the hour of execution arrived, crying out in an ecstasy of joy, he expressed his delight at being about to receive from his God the expected reward.

The death of these holy priests by no means lessened the heat of the persecution. On the contrary, the enemies of religion became more and more embittered against the faithful so that it was nothing uncommon at this period for dozens to be led almost daily to the stake.* This admirable fortitude, apart from the glory it procured for the martyrs in opening to them the kingdom of heaven, resulted in two important advantages. The first was, the enlightenment of the pagan inhabitants as to the true character of the Christian religion, in enabling its disciples to suffer such torments for the sake of divine truth; and the second, the awakening in the breasts of the faithful themselves a spirit of fervor and a zeal for religion which under more favorable circumstances they would not have had. It is only when men live upon sufferance, when they hold their lives, as it were, in their hands, that their hearts and affections become wholly detached from earthly desires and fixed on those of heaven. The faithful, however, though willing to suffer in the cause of divine truth, failed not by prayer and mortification to

* Bel., vol. 8, p. 199.

disarm the wrath of heaven and to propititiate the divinity in their behalf. Much, indeed, did they need the interposition of heaven to aid them in their contest with the powers of darkness. For the demons of persecution were now marshalling their forces and putting forth their best energies to destroy this portion of the Church of God. At Meyako, fifty of the faithful were condemned to be burned alive at this time. Their execution was one of the noblest testimonies ever rendered to the faith in any country on earth. On the morning of their death, they were mounted on chariots and paraded before the pagan population, while being conducted to the place of execution. A herald preceded them, announcing at the corner of every street the crime for which they were condemned, namely, the profession of Christianity, and the punishment they were to endure in consequence, which was to be burned alive. Far from feeling dishonored or dismayed at the nature of the sentence, these faithful soldiers of Christ proclaimed aloud, as they passed along, their faith in him for whom they were led to death. The scene witnessed at the stake was of the most affecting and impressive nature. While the flames were doing their work, devouring the bodies of their victims, no piercing cries were heard from the lips of the adult sufferers: with their eyes fixed on heaven they chanted in harmony the praises of God. The solemn thanksgiving of the martyrs, the crackling of the flames, and the imprecations of the executioners, formed at the same time a scene solemn but incongruous. The most affecting incident, however, of the whole, was the vain but tender efforts of the mothers to shield their little ones from the violence of the flames, now passing their burning hands over their children's faces, in order to lessen if possible the force of the fire, and again caressing and encouraging them to sustain the terrible ordeal and to persevere to the end.

To encourage the faithful in their terrible conflict with the powers of darkness, Paul V. anticipated in 1610, in favor of the Japanese, the ordinary plenary indulgence to be granted every quarter of a century. Few priests remained in the country at this date to impart these special favors of heaven to the true believers, and even these were quickly lessened by the arrest of some of their number. Of the captured were the fathers, Sebastien Kimara, a Japanese; Spinola, John St. Dominic, Peter Avila, Moralez, Tunica, and Flores, Europeans. The two last mentioned found their way into the hands of the authorities thus: proceeding in a Chinese junk from Manila to Japan, they were boarded by a European captain who, recognising them as priests, handed them over to their enemies. They were condemned to be burned alive, a torture they endured at Nagasaki, on the 10th of August, 1622. Shortly after, in the same year, thirty of the faithful, comprising men, women and children, were condemned to be beheaded. The sentence, far from alarming them, only caused them a supreme joy, for, instead of a loss, they regarded death as a gain. They were detained in prison till joined by thirty-two others, nearly all religious, whom the activity of the authorities had gathered from all the provinces. The latter were condemned to be burned alive, at the stake. The entire number being conducted to the place of execution, a little eminence outside the town of Nagasaki, consumated their glorious career on the 10th of September, 1622. The heads of those who were condemned to die by the sword, were first stricken off and arranged before the victims destined to perish by fire. An hour later and the flames had done their work, when the martyrs' souls entered the kingdom of heaven. The only drawback to the entire proceeding, was the temporary though not criminal weakness of two of the company, who, after the

fire had burned their hands, rushed in a paroxysm of pain to the executioners, beseeching them to put an end to their sufferings. For three days the martyrs' remains were prevented being removed, the authorities having resolved to strike terror into the hearts of all. But instead of effecting this purpose, the spectacle served only to animate the faith and zeal of the people. During the time the mutilated remains were being guarded, one of the faithful approached under the cover of night, with the view of obtaining the bodies of the martyrs; but being apprehended, he shared a like fate, being burned alive. On the fourth day the remains of the martyrs and even the ground saturated with their blood, were filled into sacks and cast into the sea.

The willingness thus manifested by the Christians of Japan to die for their faith rather than abandon it, put it entirely beyond doubt that whole provinces would have to be exterminated, if Christianity were to be rooted out of the country. This not being regarded as a politic measure, the only thing that remained for the authorities, was to take measures for the extinction of the clergy and the prevention of others landing in the kingdom. To accomplish this purpose, every effort was made to discover the retreat of the faithful priests and not without effect, for before long four of their number and two catechists were in the hands of the authorities and suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

A change in the goverment of the country occurring at this date, the attention of the authorities was diverted for the moment to political considerations and the Christians in consequence were for the time unmolested. But this was only a temporary lull in the storm. The new emperor soon showed himself more inveterate against the Christian religion than his predecessor. He filled the prisons of Yeddo

with the faithful and, on the 4th of December 1623, burned fifty of these at the stake. By the end of the same month, seventeen more had fallen victims at his hands. Nor were these the only ones who suffered by his orders: numbers of others shared the same fate, while others again were exposed on ice and left to perish by cold. Singular, however, and incomprehensible as it may appear to all who do not understand the principles of holy religion, the more that were executed the more the Christians increased. Of them it could be truly affirmed that their blood was the seed of their successors. To such an extent did the authorities proceed, that in 1624 the whole pagan population seemed to have espoused the common cause and to have taken up arms against the faithful with the view of driving them out of the land. It was not now a question of slaying the living, but of dishonoring the dead. The tombs were opened, the bodies of the departed dragged forth and subjected to the most shameful and revolting profanations. Every-where the stake, the sword, the lash, and a thousand other instruments of torture were called into requisition to shake the constancy of the faithful. Nothing equal to the torture inflicted was probably ever employed by any enemy of religion. It seemed as if all hell had been let loose and suffered to employ its direst efforts against the servants of God. Beheading with the sword and burning at the stake being regarded as too expeditious and easy, the enemies of religion now devised another mode of torture whereby the sufferings of the victims could be prolonged to a considerable extent. In some instances the condemned were cast into trenches filled with vipers, in others they were thrown into pits of brimstone and other combustible matter which was duly fired. While again, stripped naked, they had their bodies pricked all over with sharp-pointed instruments, this being supplemented by lighted torches applied to their

sides. But the reader will be able to form a better idea of the sufferings of the faithful from the words of one who, as a historian of the country, has given a detailed account of the various modes of torture employed to induce the Christians to apostatize. "Some," says Charlevoix, "had their nails torn out, others their arms and legs bored by gimlets. Awls were thrust under their nails, not only once but several times. They were cast into fosses filled with vipers. Pipes, filled with tow impregnated with sulphur and other infected matter and set on fire, were applied to their nostrils so that they might be necessitated to inhale the smoke which was the cause of intolerable pain. Some were pricked all over the body with sharp-pointed rods, while others again were burned with lighted torches. Some were suspended in the air and whipped until the bones were laid bare, and others attached to great stakes, in the form of a cross, which they were compelled to drag along until they fainted from exhaustion. To cause the mothers double torture, the executioners used to strike them on the head with their infants, and the rage of these men was in keeping with the cries of the little ones. For the most part the victims, both men and women, were naked and that during the cold season. At times while in that condition, they were promenaded from city to city and village to village, and at other times they were attached to posts and made to occupy the most humiliating and painful positions. Ordinarily they had not a moment of repose, the executioners, like so many hungry tigers, being ceaselessly occupied in devising new tortures. They twisted their arms until they were dislocated: they cut off their fingers, applied fire to the mutilated parts, and tore out the nerves. In fine, they burned them slowly, passing the burning brands at a slow rate over all the members. Every day and sometimes every moment had its peculiar torture. This barbarity

made, indeed, several apostates; but the number of the martyrs was very great, and the greater number of those who had yielded to the force of the torments were hardly at liberty till they openly repented of their infidelity. In the end, several after being put to the torture were handed over to depraved women in order that they might be perverted. One day fifty Christians were promenaded at Ximanara in a manner calculated to cover them with confusion, after which they were conducted into an esplanade to be tortured in all kinds of manner. Amongst these were seven especially, and more particularly one a woman whose courage caused the presiding judge the greatest annoyance so that he was beside himself with rage. He had seven trenches dug at two arms-length distant from each other. In these he planted seven crosses to which he attached the seven victims and, after having encased their heads in boards, he commenced sawing them in different parts, some on the neck, some on the arms. etc. From time to time salt was cast on the wounds to increase their torture and thus, for five days, the victims continued to be tormented. The executioners relieved each other by turns, for their rage was obliged to yield to the constancy of the generous confessors of Jesus Christ." Nor was this all. In 1633 a new species of torture was invented. It consisted of a pulley and cords by which the victim was lowered by the feet into a trench filled with all manner of foulness and kept in that inverted position till he expired. In fine, the Christians being driven to desperation took up arms in self-defense and, to the number of 37,000, put themselves under the leadership of one of their princes. At first success attended their efforts; they besieged and captured the town of Ximanara, but their victory was only of short duration. They were in turn besieged by a pagan army of 80,000, with whom the Dutch Protestants united lending for the occasion their artillery.

After a noble and heroic resistance, the native Christians were finally, from want of provisions, compelled to come forth, and heroically fought till the last man was cut down. This was the last of Christianity in the country. In 1640, the king of Portugal sent an embassy to Japan, but some of the members were slain and others sent back with this answer: "As long as the light of heaven shines, no Christian shall dare enter into Japan. Let all understand that if king Philip himself, the king of the Christians, or Xaca, the principle god of our empire, should contravene this command, he shall have his head cut off." From that time all the people were compelled annually to trample on the cross to make sure that no Christian remained in the kingdom. Several attempts were subsequently made by missionary priests to enter the country, but in vain. The last who found his way there was Father Sidotti, a Sicilian: he arrived in 1709 but was almost immediately arrested and conducted to Yeddo, where he was incarcerated and died after long sufferings. From that date Japan has remained without priests, and if there be any vestiges of the faith there at present, they are only slight and greatly disfigured. But though the religion was practically destroyed in that country, it is not without feelings of pleasure that we can look back to the past, bearing in mind that between 1542 and 1633 as many as two millions of the native population died for the faith.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FAITH INTRODUCED INTO CHINA—FATHER RICCI—HOW HE BEGAN HIS LABORS—HE GOES TO PEKIN—HIS LABORS AND DEATH—PERSECUTION BEGINS—EDICT OF THE EMPEROR—GREAT SUFFERING OF THE FAITHFUL—POLITICAL CONDITION OF THE EMPIRE—DIFFICULTIES REGARDING THE USE OF CERTAIN CEREMONIES—CLEMENT XI. SENDS A LEGATE TO CHINA—HIS IMPOLITIC COURSE AND THE INJURIES TO RELIGION IN CONSEQUENCE—THE CONTROVERSY REGARDING THE LAWFULNESS OF THE CEREMONIES OBTAINS A WIDER FIELD—IT IS MUCH DEBATED IN EUROPE—DEPLORABLE CONDITION OF THE FAITHFUL IN 1724—EDICT AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

While the Christians were suffering for the faith, as we have seen, in Japan, the gospel was being preached with greater freedom in the neighboring empire of China. The Apostle of the Indies, the great St. Francis Xavier, died on the confines of that country, when about to enter it in the discharge of his apostolic labors. Forty years later, a member of the same illustrious society, Father Ricci, was destined to do what was denied to his sainted predecessor. In 1583, this apostolic man set out from Macao, and established himself at Choaquin. He did not follow the usual method adopted by missionaries. Understanding the character of the people he had to deal with, and their unbounded admiration for learning, he began his endeavors by instructing the youth in secular matters. Having thus established his reputation for learning, and conciliated to himself the affections of his pupils, he would be more readily able to obtain a reception for the doctrines of divine truth. With this view, he opened an establishment at the place above mentioned, wherein he instructed in the sciences, but

especially in mathematics, the youth of the country. In this laborious task he was aided by two of his confreres; men like himself, of considerable ability, and great apostolic zeal. His efforts in the glorious cause of truth, were not long unrewarded: the halls of his institute were rapidly filled with ardent and enthusiastic admirers; the fame of the fathers as mathematical teachers, spread through the country, and before long, amongst the number of their pupils were several neophytes. But this success, however gratifying and encouraging, was only the beginning of the missionaries' trouble and sorrow. The mandarins and leading men of the community, learning of the father's influence with his pupils, employed every means in their power to disparage him in the eyes of the people. Bad feeling, hatred, and animosity were accordingly aroused against the apostle; nor were these the only difficulties he had to contend with at this time. For, being deprived by death of his able coadjutors in the ministry, he now found himself alone in that great pagan empire, unsupported by any human aid. Under such circumstances, it required all the courage, the zeal, and resolution of an apostle, to bear up against the difficulties by which he was surrounded. To attempt single-handed to storm the stronghold of paganism, to make an impression upon an empire of several hundred millions of unbelievers, was at the same time, a gigantic, grand, and perilous undertaking. But he had the courage of a saint and the zeal of an apostle. He had undertaken his Master's work, and he relied on Him for the support that was needed. Nothing daunted by the hostility excited against him, he continued his labors and added thereto, by composing some treatises in the vernacular, on science and religion. These were admirably received, and were the means of carrying the knowledge of the missionary and his doctrine, far and wide. Several of the more not-

able of the *literati* frequented his instructions and corrected their errors. For, though China was then regarded as a civilized land, where learning was carefully cultivated, yet, it was entirely inferior to Europe, as at present. The learned, for instance, were not aware that the lunar eclipses were the result of another planet interposing between that luminary and the sun; nor were they aware of the rotundity of the earth, nor of the true character of the elements of nature; while in fine, they looked upon everything, designated under the heading of space, as a vacuum. The correction of such erroneous ideas and the satisfactory demonstration of the truth, gave the apostle a corresponding influence and command over the minds of his auditors. Indeed, such an ascendancy did he obtain over them, that had not the fears engendered by pagan superstition, stood in the way, all would readily have embraced the Christian religion. All, however, were not equally fearful. In several instances, the pupils yielding to the influence of divine grace, embraced the Christian faith and helped to spread it amongst their pagan friends. Still Father Ricci felt that he had not fairly begun. Until he had obtained the emperor's permission to preach through the empire, he was aware that his efforts would be comparatively trifling, and to obtain such a permission, a voyage to the capital was necessary. To this end, he resolved upon proceeding to Pekin, and in order to conciliate the emperor in his favor, he carried with him a costly assortment of articles, which he had brought to the country for that purpose. Amongst the articles of value were pictures, clocks and such like. But, while employing these as a means of obtaining an audience at court, he did not neglect the still more important and efficacious one, of humble and fervent prayer to his heavenly Master. Everything answered his highest expectations; the emperor was pleased with the

presents, accepted them in the most gracious and affable manner; granted the apostle permission to settle at the capital, and honored him further, by granting him entree into one of the royal inclosures—a privilege, conceded only to officers of the highest rank. Being thus established in the capital, under the protection of the emperor, the gospel was quickly spread through the country. The purity of the new religion, the sublimity of its maxims, but above all, the effect it produced on the lives and character of its disciples, in rendering them patient, disinterested and modest, won for it the admiration of the unbelievers, and generally favored the idea, that a religion so holy must surely have descended from heaven. The progress of the faith, was consequently very considerable, so that before long several Catholic churches were to be seen at the capital and through the provinces. It must not, however, be supposed that all this was effected without opposition on the part of the pagans. No sooner did the bonzes understand that their influence was being undermined, and the source of their profits decreased, than they had recourse to every art in their power to prejudice the people against the apostle. To defend himself against these wanton attacks, he had recourse to the pen, and published a series of articles and brochures, which, if they did not entirely achieve the object intended, at least were productive of confirming the believers, and carrying the seeds of divine truth into several hearts. The labor thus imposed upon the apostle, coupled with his other numerous employments, proved eventually too much for his strength, and brought him to the grave, in the 58th year of his age.

The death of Ricci, was the moment seized upon by the enemy of man's salvation for testing the fidelity of the Christians to the new religion. A more opportune moment could not be selected. He, who alone of all others

was best calculated to rouse their drooping spirits, to brace them against the danger and to lead them if need should be to torture and death, was now asleep in the tomb. His powerful words and impressive example were no longer to be experienced. Excited bythe bonzes, who by this time were thoroughly enraged against the Christians, on account of the marked success that attended the missionaries' efforts, the authorities resolved upon expelling the Fathers from the empire This resolution was founded on the plea of providing for the security of the country whose interests, it was alleged, the strangers were seriously endangering. Accordingly, on the 20th of August, 1616, orders were forwarded to the government authorities to seize upon the missionaries and cast them into prison. The execution of the sentence was only partially effected, for the Fathers, being apprised of the intentions of the government, managed in several instances to effect their escape by concealment. Others on the other hand, were unwilling to have recourse to any such means and preferred offering themselves as victims in the cause of divine truth. The indignities to which they were subjected, were in a measure harder to bear than the gibbet or the stake. Kicked, abused, smitten on the countenance, spit upon, and dishonored in a thousand ways by the excited pagan multitude, these men of God, like the Master they served, were dragged from tribunal to tribunal, under the mocking plea of exercising justice in their regard. In fine, on the 6th of March 1616, they were condemned to death, for having preached a new religion in the country; but, this extreme penalty of the law was afterwards commuted to banishment for life to their own country. Confined in a cage employed for the transport of criminals convicted of capital offenses with a chain attached to their necks, irons on their hands and their garments in disorder to indicate their character

of strangers and barbarians, they were transported from the capital to the confines of the empire, every-where on their journey being outraged and insulted by the rabble. Before them was borne the royal decree, written in legible characters, and forbidding them all communication with the people. Thus confined and manacled as convicts, they were transported from Nankin to Canton and thence despatched to Macao.

Although the edict of the emperor was general and applied equally to all the missionaries of the empire, it did not find a strict application except at Nankin and Pekin. In other localities the Fathers readily found an asylum with the faithful. Even at Pekin, the Christians were not deprived of the ministrations of religion, for the emperor's edict having in view only the expulsion of the strangers the indigenous clergy were not included within its provisions and thus were secured to the Church at the capital, the services of two native born religious. After a time, too, when the excitement created against the missionaries had somewhat subsided, some of the banished ecclesiastics found the means of returning to the empire. Their doing so, was indeed at the peril of their lives; but men who had given all to the glory of God were not alarmed at the thought of dying in his cause. Three years after the first edict of persecution had been issued, and while a comparative security was being enjoyed by the Church, a second storm was raised against the faithful. The pretext seized upon in this instance, was the alleged hostility of the Christians to the existing power and their participation with the secret, political party, then at work for the overthrow of the reigning dynasty. At this date a most formidable secret society, entitled the Pi-Lien Kiao or White Lily Society, having for its object the overthrow of the Ming dynasty and the establishment of the

Manchoo Tartar rule, sprang up in the empire and quickly extended its ramifications all over the country. It was a most formidable conspiracy and worked most effectively for the object in view. In 1622, one of the leaders was arrested by the government but rescued by his followers who now openly avowed their intentions and broke out into revolt. For a time they gave the authorities considerable trouble and gained not a few important advantages, but having to contend against a superior force they were necessitated to retire. Justly alarmed at so formidable a conspiracy, the authorities now set themselves vigorously to work to root out of the empire this dangerous society. A more favorable opportunity could hardly be offered the enemies of religion, for incriminating the Christians. As in the days of the Roman empire, the assembling of the faithful for the object of divine worship was unfairly misconstrued, and the services of the Church regarded as secret political gatherings, so their assembling in the instance referred to was readily connected with the society named. All that was required to impress this upon the minds of the authorities was a lively imagination and a prejudice against the religion. Both were at hand. Unfortunately, too, for the religion the man who could do most in allaying or fostering the prejudices of the people, the prime minister of the day, was the bitter enemy of of the religion. Working upon the popular feeling this enemy of divine truth issued a manifesto condemnatory of all secret societies, but, especially of that of the White Lily and of the Lord of Heaven (by which he meant the Christian religion). The document after declaring that the members of both were equally obnoxious, ended in this fashion: "The law of the Lord of Heaven is false; it deludes men, it encourages them to hold secret societies. In former years the magistrates presented to the emperor

some memorials against the partisans of that sect, and severely prohibited their religion; and now those who profess that bad doctrine are guilty of not obeying the will of the emperor. According to the laws of the empire, it would be necessary to severely pursue these people with rigor and punish them; but, being ignorant and insignificant persons, they do not deserve all the severity of the laws. As for the foreigners, let them be compelled to quit the empire and let the native Chinese be imprisoned for a month and suffer the cangue; and they shall be afterwards taken before their respective tribunals and exhorted upon their obedience to the emperor and the avoidance of bad doctrines."*

The persecution that followed the publication of this edict, was of an alarming character. Every-where the Christians were dragged before the tribunals, insulted, condemned, and cast into prison. The property of the mission was confiscated and even employed as material for accusations against the religious. The divine service was suspended, the missionaries arrested, the people dispersed and the entire organization of religious subverted, so that what before was a fair and flourishing community was now a scattered abandoned flock without leaders, without head. But though the Church was thus desolated by order of the tyrant, and alarm had spread far and wide, there were some who maintained their composure and showed themselves as fearless and independent as the greatest champions of religion in the primitive age. Following the example of Tertullian, Quadratus, and others, who when the Church was similarly attacked came forward with a defense of her doctrines, Doctors Leon Paul, Michael, and Father De la Roque now drew up an apology in favor of religion showing its spirit and object and its entire dissimilarity from the White Lily Society. Dr. Paul was intrusted with the document and

* Christianity in China, etc., by Huc, vol. ii., p. 239.

charged with presenting it to the emperor, for which purpose he proceeded to Pekin. The prime minister hearing of his mission anticipated his efforts by framing an accusation against the apolgists on the ground of their being conspirators and in league with the members of the White Lily Society. What the result of this would have been, it would not be difficult to imagine, had not divine providence interposed and summoned its author out of existence.

While the enemies of religion were thus pursuing with an unrelenting hatred the unoffending Christians, the political condition of the empire was undergoing important changes. The Manchoo Tartars had gained many important victories, while their king advanced to the very gates of Pekin and assumed the title of emperor of China. Even an army 600,000 men had suffered defeat and left on the field 50,000 of their number. The emperor's attention was accordingly diverted from the Christians. He found sufficient occupation in providing for the pacification of his subjects and the defense of his empire against the hostile attacks of the Tartar hordes. The capability of the expatriated clergy and their acknowledged superiority in mathematical acquirements now afforded the friends of religion an opportunity of suggesting to the emperor the advantage that the presence of such men would be to the country at so critical a juncture. Much stress was laid on the fact of their military knowledge and the important services they would be able to render in the defense of the country. A petition was accordingly framed and presented to the emperor begging the recall of the missionaries. The document received his majesty's approval and an order was given for the return of the strangers. Their brethren had not to wait very long for their appearance for they were already in the country being concealed in the dwellings of their converts. Their reappearance was attended

with as much novelty as the order for their departure had been arbitrary in character. At Pekin whence but a little before they were driven in dishonor, they were now received with unusual pomp and a residence assigned them in the palace of the minister of war. The fear lest their friends may not have taken a very embarrassing way of obtaining their recall must at that moment have seriously occured to their minds. For if a miltitary and not a literary service were now demanded at their hands, the object of their mission was at an end. Excusing themselves accordingly in declining the quarters assigned to them, on the grounds of their unworthiness in not having rendered any services of importance to the state, the Fathers solicited and obtained the authorities' permission to occupy their original dwelling. Thus after the short lapse of time these men who were expelled as traitors and criminals amid the universal execration of the populace, were now re-installed amid popular rejoicing as the bulwark and defenders of the nation! Such is popular fancy! The liberty and privileges granted the Fathers, under these altered conditions, enabled them to repair in great measure the damage that had been inflicted on the mission in their absence. They extended their labors, too, to parts hitherto unevangelized, and attained such a reputation for learning and sanctity that they were revered even by the pagans. It seemed as if the days of persecution and of opposition were never to be renewed in that land. But though the emperor and his subjects in general were most favorably disposed in regard of the missionaries, the bonzes on the other hand manifested a decided hostility to their presence. This opposition, indeed, did not show itself further than in petty annoyances, for as long as the emperor was favorably disposed, acts injurious to the missionaries were not to be thought of. But the throne becoming vacant in 1661, and

a regency having assumed the management of affairs the spirit of intolerance was evoked again. Once more the storm of persecution burst over the infant Church and laid again in ruins the various mission establishments erected by the apostolic zeal and energy of the Fathers. The first to fall in this new attack on the lives and liberties of the faithful was the eminent servant of God, Father Adam Shall, S. J., who was condemned to be strangled and cut into pieces. At the same time, others were cast into prison and condemned in like manner to death, but the sentence was not carried into effect. For a great conflagration occurring at this time, accompanied by an earthquake during which a portion of the imperial palace was laid in ruins, the authorities became so alarmed that fearing their action against the Christians may have been the cause of the displeasure of the gods they opened the prison and allowed all to escape with the exception of Shall, who was retained and continued a prisoner till the 15th of August 1661, when he died from confinement and ill-usage. The release of the faithful from prison did not imply an entire cessation of hostilities. The authorities were still determined to rid the country of the presence of the foreigners and hence, while four were retained at Pekin with the view of utilizing their services, the others to the number of five and twenty were expelled the empire. Of these there were twenty-one Jesuits, three Dominicans and one Franciscan.

The difficulties the missionaries had to contend with, from the death of Father Ricci in 1610, till 1616, the period at which we are now arrived, were not wholly confined to those inherent to the establishment of Christianity and paganism. There were others of a different kind and originated with themselves. They grew out of a misconception regarding the use of certain religious observances which were regarded by some as allowable and by others

as sinful. To accomodate themselves, as far as was possible, to the prejudices of the people and thereby obtain the confidence of their disciples, the first missionaries saw nothing improper in permitting what they regarded as civil, but not religious, demonstrations in honor of Confucius and in memory of the departed in general. For an entire generation, that is, from 1580, the date of the arrival of Father Ricci, till the time of his death in 1610, this concession continued to be made to the prejudices of the people. At the latter date, however, Father Longobardi, also a member of the same Society, and who succeeded Father Ricci in the post of director of the missions, took a different view of the matter. Prior to that time, indeed, he had felt difficulty in reconciling his conscience with what he regarded as an objectionable custom, but deference to the judgment of his superior, and obedience to the voice of authority, overruled his ideas and calmed his scruples. Now, however, the matter was different. In his new capacity of superior he was responsible to none but God, and he felt compelled accordingly to satisfy himself fully regarding the legitimacy of the custom. A careful examination of the entire case, in which he was aided by a diligent perusal of the writings of Confucius, caused him to arrive at an adverse decision. Viewed in the light that his researches now shed on the matter, the tolerated practises seemed grossly superstitious and flagrantly criminal. In no sense could they be any longer permitted to the disciples of the Redeemer, and had accordingly to be condemned. Happy for the interests of religion had this admirable decision been accepted in the spirit in which it was given! Then would have been avoided the painful and disgraceful contentions which followed, to the great detriment of religion and the common scandal of all. Some of the missionaries, indeed, accepted the decision with

pleasure as expressive of the sentiments they entertained on the matter themselves; but others refused to submit to it unless approved by the sovereign pontiff. The matter was accordingly referred to Rome in 1645, and an order obtained prohibiting the use of the questionable ceremonies until a proper investigation could be made regarding their nature. Meantime, a second decree was issued by Alexander VII., permitting the use of the ceremonies to the instructed, provided they regarded them solely as of a civil or political character. The Dominicans and Franciscans then in the country obtained an additional order embracing in substance the two previous, and declaring that the practises might be followed *pro tem.*, provided they were not associated in the minds of the worshippers with pagan religious observances. Such a ruling was all that could be reasonably expected under the circumstances. To arrive at a careful decision it was necessary to obtain the requisite information, and to this end Innocent XI. despatched Monseigneur Maigrat as visitor apostolic, with instructions to examine the cause of the dispute, and to report thereon. After a careful and patient hearing of the arguments on both sides, this learned and pious ecclesiastic pronounced the ceremonies idolatrous and opposed to the sanctity of the Christian religion. This, however, did not terminate the contest. The advocates of the obnoxious practises still clung to their former opinions and proceedings. They pretended that the judgment was temerarious and rendered upon a false statement of evidence. Thus they calmed their own and their followers' consciences, while they continued the practice of the objectionable ceremonies. Furthermore, they forwarded a counter statement of the matter to Rome.

The limits of the controversy were now considerably enlarged: the battle-ground was virtually transferred from Asia to Europe. The friends and admirers of the visitor

apostolic on the one hand, and those of the missionaries who favored the ceremonies on the other, defended each the side on which they were ranged. A spirit of irritation bordering on bitterness could be discovered in many, if not most, of their writings. From this the calm and unimpassioned professed to detect the existence of a collusion between the Jansenist party and the advocates of the ceremonies. However that may be, the fact of the author of the provincial letters having espoused the prohibited customs, tended not a little, in Catholic France, to create a spirit of hostility thereto. Meanwhile, the matter was being carefully investigated at Rome by the proper authorities, who, before rendering a decision, deigned to consult the faculty of Paris. The answer returned, in the name of 140 Doctors, was wholly in accord with the opinion of the investigating committee of Rome. The Pope, Clement XI., however, did not issue any public decision, but despatched, as his legate to the emperor of China, the patriarch of Antioch, Monseigneur De Tournon, with instructions to act in the premises. On the 8th of April, 1705, this prelate arrived at Canton in China. The reception he met with from the emperor was of the most gratifying kind. Never before did any official or ambassador receive such marked attention at court. He was lodged in the palace, and had all his requirements attended to. At his public reception by the emperor, he was waited upon by the chief mandarins, while the emperor himself presented him with a goblet of wine, a mark of respect never accorded to a subject. The honors and distinction thus bestowed upon the legate, were continued until the time of his departure, when by order of the emperor, numerous and costly presents were prepared to be forwarded, through him, to the sovereign pontiff. Unhappily a misunderstanding regarding the appointment of an official to take charge of these

valuables, happened. The emperor's choice had fallen upon one of the missionaries, Father Bouvet, but the legate, on the other hand, designed for the charge Monseigneur Sabini; the consequence of which disagreement was, that the presents were not forwarded at all.

It was from this slight beginning that much of the future trouble that afflicted that ill-fated kingdom arose. The impolitic proceeding of the legate, was the spark from which originated the subsequent conflagration that swept over the land with such destructive effect. From that moment the emperor's affections were cooled in regard to religion: he took no further interest in the missionaries and their proceedings. Their disagreements became to him not only a subject of scandal, but of suspicion. His successor inherited a like prejudice, and to assure himself that religious and not political aims were the object of their endeavors, he employed one of his menials to simulate conversion in order to learn more accurately the working of the system. In this unpleasant state of affairs an opportunity was offered the malevolent of injuring the cause of divine truth, and they were not slow in turning it to account, especially the bonzes, whose hostility to the missionaries was of the bitterest kind. In short, from that moment the Church began to lose favor, and the visit of the legate, instead of an advantage was a positive injury to religion. So great was the change effected in the state of affairs, that in the following year, 1706, an edict was issued ordering the departure of all the European religious, except in cases where formal permission to the contrary was obtained, and that under the express condition that nothing contrary to the worship of Confucius be inculcated. All through the country the command was carried into effect with the utmost exactitude, the missionaries being seized and sent in chains to Canton and Macao. News of these proceedings

having arrived in Europe, Clement XI. wrote to the emperor, expressing his regret that his legate should be guilty of anything that could reasonably give offense to his majesty, and entertaining a hope that the Christians might be permitted to practice their religion, without being necessitated to conform to the objectionable customs which had been disapproved. The sovereign pontiff's communication made no impression upon the mind of the emperor. The mandarins were still at liberty to persecute the faithful—a liberty which, in several instances, they employed with ruinous effect.

The difference of opinion regarding the rites and customs followed by the neophytes still continued to be shared in by the missionaries. Nothing, it was evident, could terminate the dispute but a judgment of the vicar of Christ. That was accordingly given. In 1710, the holy see formally condemned the objectionable customs, and commanded the heads of the various religious communities then in the country, to communicate the same to their subjects. Had the good of religion and a ready spirit of obedience animated the breasts of all, this would have terminated the trouble; but when passion enters into a controversy, men are oftentimes more guided by it than by reason. The action taken in regard to the recent decree, is an exemplification of this. The favorers of the custom still found means of avoiding and evading its force. On the ground that it was only a rescript, and provisional, they refused to abandon the practice. It was then evident that the dissensions were assuming schismatical proportions, and so to crush out so nefarious a spirit, Leo issued a bull condemning as idolatrous, in the most positive and formal manner, the objectionable custom. To avoid subsequent trouble and every possibility of evading the force of the document, a formulary was attached whereto every

missionary was bound to subscribe unreservedly upon oath. The dignitary charged by his holiness with the execution of this document, was the patriarch of Alexandria. His arrival in China unhappily did not bring peace to the country. The spirit of discord is an evil seed which it is difficult to wholly eradicate. Even then an effort was made to avoid the force of the sovereign pontiff's decision. The Jesuit missionaries who favored the practice, suggested to his majesty to make an avowal of their purely civil and social character. He did so after consulting with the principal mandarins and *literati* of the country. This was an unfortunate course for the friends of religion to adopt; it was literally putting the emperor above the pontiff, and making him the judge of what was permissible and what not, in the controversy. Such a proceeding could end only in disaster for the faith. By many it was regarded as a great advance in the direction of truth; according to them it was removing the main and almost only object that prevented the country from becoming wholly Christian. The most favorable expectations were entertained by the advocates of the ceremonies. But in this they were entirely deceived, for on the 11th of June, 1742, Benedict XIV. issued a bull upholding and confirming the decision given by his predecessor, Clement XI., two and thirty years previous. This was the end of the controversy. The missionaries had no other alternative but to obey. The emperor in consequence, became the avowed enemy of Christianity; conversions ceased, and the religion was proscribed.

From the foregoing, the reader can see that the origin of the controversy is not to be attributed to the jealousy of rival religious. It was purely a matter of conscience, some viewing the use of the ceremonies in one light, and others in another. If in the progress of the discussion, Franciscans and Dominicans joined in condemning the practice

that is no reason why they should be stigmatized as acting from motives of jealousy. For as we have seen, it was a Jesuit, Father Longobardi, who first objected to the rites and this not before he had carefully examined the writings of Confucius, and come to the conclusion that they were not civil but religious in their nature. The persecution carried on by this emperor was not lessened but increased under his son and successor, Yong Tching. The condition of the faithful is thus described at that time in a letter addressed by Father Maillo to a member of the society in Europe, dated Pekin, 16th of October, 1724: "How can I describe to you the sad condition in which we are, and the deplorable scenes which are occurring under our eyes. What we feared for so many years, what we predicted, has happened at last. Our holy religion is entirely proscribed in the whole of China. All the missionaries, excepting those at court, are driven from the empire. Our churches are demolished or appropriated to profane uses. Edicts have gone forth requiring the Christians to renounce the faith, and prohibiting others from embracing it. Such is the deplorable state in which this mission actually exists, which has cost us for the last two hundred years so much labor." The letter continues to state that the origin of this persecution was the representation addressed by an apostate Christian to the local governor of Fon Gau, regarding the character of the Christian religion. This local magnate having referred the matter to his superior received the following communication: "I understand that in your district there are those who profess the religion of the Lord of Heaven; that the rich and the poor embrace it; that they have temples in the towns and country; and, what is more reprehensible still, that there are young girls to whom marriage is forbidden and who are styled virgins. I understand moreover that when the members are addressed, there is no

distinction made between men and women, and that in the territory of Fon Gau there are sixteen temples of this sect. This strange religion seduces the people and corrupts good manners. It is then a wise policy to proscribe it, and arrest its progress. I accordingly send you instructions to this effect, and command you to be careful to interdict this sect and to close its temples. If, therefore, there be any hereafter to violate these orders punish them according to the law. Arrest without delay those who follow this strange doctrine, and punish them as they deserve. Let none be pardoned." To this the mandarin of Fon Gau answered as follows: "I have endeavored to execute your orders and have spoken to the Christians on several occasions. But one would imagine they were intoxicated, so little did they manifest a desire of awakening from their slumbers. Far from desiring to correct their faults they only ridicule my advice. I understand by the reports sent to me of the number of their temples, that there are eighteen of them. Great sums were necessary to construct these temples and they have been furnished by their converts. These poor people, who are so parsimonious when there is a question of any other expense, do not regret that they contribute for so pernicious a purpose; they even mortgage their possessions and sell their inheritance. Young women and girls, who become members of this religion, go into a retired place and disclose to these Europeans their secret thoughts—this is what they call confession. They are not ashamed to assemble pell-mell, men and women in the same building, children of rank and young men performing actions entirely unworthy of their state and condition of life. In this sect the members do not remember their parents when dead; they soon forget their origin and family. They are as water without a source, and as a tree without roots. They do not render any

honor to the sages from whom we have received our doctrine. Thus the Chinese is metamorphised into the European. The girls also observe continence, never marrying, while those whose spouses died never marry again and are content to pass their lives without children. Is not that a sect that seduces the people, which disunites families and corrupts good morals? The matter is of consequence. Give then immediately the most rigorous orders for the establishment of the customs which have been perverted. As regards the temples of those persons, it seems to me they should be demolished."

Acting on these instructions the viceroy Tson-Ton issued the following edict: "The doctrines which the ancient sages have taught men, the instructions of the emperors for the government of the people, and the good rules of conduct of our empire, are embraced in the five duties of man and in the code of our laws. In our government of Fon-kien all apply themselves to the study of our ceremonies and laws. But this they neglect in the province of Fon-Gau-Hien where a European has recently arrived, who takes the title of Master of Heaven and of the Law and who remains concealed. The religion he preaches sows trouble amongst the people and makes them doubt of the goodness of the laws. Not only the laborers and merchants listen to him and follow him, but even men of letters have become so infatuated that they cannot distinguish right from wrong. This European admits into his system, men and women who are not ashamed to mix together without distinction of sex. These poor, blind creatures empty their purses to erect temples. Who could under such circumstances and with the light we have before our eyes, behold with tranquillity the demon of illusion and of error thus running riot on all sides? Those who profess this law regard our ancient sages and our ancestors as so

many evil genii. They do not offer them any respect and even refuse to perform the accustomed ceremonies. They glory in not having posterity: they exhort the girls not to marry, and those who follow their counsel they style virgins. Furthermore, they have a kind of dark room where men and women enter and speak in a low voice. That is what they call confessing. Now of all sects, this *is the most pernicious.* It is required by our law that the chief of a sect who deceives the people should be strangled, while those who are his assistants are to be punished with a hundred lashes and banished to a distance of not more than 300 leagues. Again it is strictly prohibited to erect new temples of any sort whatever, and should anyone contravene these orders he shall be banished forever the empire, the temples shall be destroyed, and the land and materials confiscated. Wherefore we, Tson-Ton, viceroy, order that this Christian chief be seized and conducted to Macao with the prohibition never to return to China. We order likewise persons of every condition to detach themselves from so pernicious a law and to correct their errors They should apply themselves to reading the works of our ancient sages in order that there be no diversity of customs, that the people may persevere in their integrity of purpose and not suffer themselves to be seduced by false sects. The names of those who renounce the sect, we require to be transmitted to us, not only for the sake of pardoning their crime but also with the view of praising their zeal. We shall deprive of their position all who refuse to submit; we shall punish them according to the law, for theirs is a crime that is unpardonable. If the mandarins shall favor them, they themselves shall be deposed.—Done in the first year of Yong-Tching, the second of the eighth moon, that is the 7th of September, 1723."

In consequence of this decree the missionaries were

necessitated to quit the empire and to retire provisionally to Canton, their final destination being Macao. Three hundred thousand people were accordingly left without pastors, and 300 churches were confiscated and employed for civil or idolatrous purposes. A few of the Fathers were retained at the capital, in consequence of their services as mathematicians and artists, but this was only temporary, for nine years later, in 1732, this toleration came to an end, and even those in whose favor an exception was made, were obliged to share the exile of their brethren.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SERVICES OF RELIGION SUSPENDED IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE RECENT EDICT—PREJUDICES AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS—THE MISSIONARIES CHARGED WITH MAGICAL PRACTICES—THE CHRISTIANS ENJOY REPOSE FOR SOME TIME—THE RELIGION AGAIN PROSCRIBED—IT IS PRONOUNCED CONTRARY TO THE LAWS OF THE NATION—PERSECUTION IS ACCORDINGLY BEGUN—THE MISSIONARIES TRY TO PROVIDE FOR THE WANTS OF THE MISSION BY OPENING A SEMINARY IN THIBET—MARTYRDOM OF FATHER PERBOYRE—EVENTS IN COCHIN-CHINA.

Twelve years had now elapsed since the publication of the edict for the expulsion of the missionaries and the destruction of their churches. In the interim, the services of religion were wholly suspended and the people deprived of all spiritual aid. But a ray of hope now shone upon the suffering Christians. In 1735 the emperor Yong-Tching died and was succeeded by his son and heir Kian-Loung. The first minister of this ruler, Ma-Tzi, being favorable to the Christians, a hope was entertained that all persecution would cease and that the missionaries would be again at liberty to enter the country and prosecute their holy calling. But these favorable anticipations were wholly delusive. The influential mandarins set themselves firmly against all toleration and had a petition presented to the emperor to this effect. The immediate result was an order commanding those of the military who were converts to return to their former religion, and strictly prohibiting all further conversion to Christianity. The persecution, accordingly, broke out with much force and although many showed a weakness in the moment of trial, the great bulk of the people manifested a noble intrepidity worthy of the primitive ages. At

length the Fathers found means of approaching the emperor, and in a petition supplicated his clemency; the result of which was a partial cessation of the severity employed against the believers. But this was only a temporary lull in the storm.

Two years later, in 1737, an incident happened which evoked once more in its worst characteristics the evil spirit of persecution. It has been common in that country from time immemorial for persons to abandon their children by placing them in the streets or on the door-steps. On the part of the government, hospitals are established where these little outcasts are placed and cared for. Several, if not most, die either from the exposure or the ill-treatment they receive from their guardians. A native catechist having access to the hospital, employed himself with the connivance of the director in administering to the dying the sacred rite of baptism. An account of this having reached the ears of the authorities, the worthy man was summoned before the governor of Pekin, and sentenced to receive a hundred lashes and to bear the cangue for six months, at the expiration of which period, he was to receive forty other lashes. The sentence was couched in the following language: "In examining our registers we find that in the first year of Yong-Tching, in response to a petition presented by Monan-Pao, of the province of Fon-Kien, the tribunal of ceremonies prohibited under severe punishment to embrace the Christian religion, and ordered those who had embraced it to abandon it. Now it appears from the answers of Lieon-Eul, in the interrogatory he has undergone, that disregarding this law he went to the foundling hospital, and pronounced *certain magic words* while pouring water on the heads of the infants with the view of curing them. In consequence of which act we condemn said Lieon-Eul to receive a hundred lashes and to bear the cangue for six

months at the expiration of which time he is to receive forty more lashes. As to Ching-Tsi, the director of the establishment, inasmuch as he could not be ignorant of the fact that Lieon-Eul employed magic to cure the children, his duty being to prevent that, we order him to receive thirty lashes, though according to the rigor of the law, he should receive eighty. In fine, we order that the little brass vessel in which Lieon-Eul carried the water shall be broken in pieces. This resolution which we have come to, shall be sent to the governor of Pekin and to the tribunal of Ton-cha-Quen in order that they notify the same to the five departments of the city and to the two Hiens that they govern, so that both may prohibit under grievous penalties any and all from frequenting the hospitals under the pretext of curing the sick, but in reality of enrolling them in the Christian religion. Furthermore, they shall require those who have embraced that sect to abandon it forthwith, and the prohibition ordering the same shall be posted in all the thoroughfares of their respective districts."

In accordance with the foregoing, placards shortly after appeared in all the public places, prohibiting any one from repairing to the hospital for the purposes indicated, and calling upon those who had already embraced the religion to renounce it under the severest of penalties. In the face of these prohibitions nothing remained for the missionaries but to petition the emperor. The document containing their supplication was forwarded by his majesty to the court of criminal procedure, in order to be examined and reported on. But as that was the very tribunal whence the document quoted above, prohibiting the Christian religion, had emanated, it was evident that the fate of the memorial was already determined. The result showed this. After examining the petition the judges answered to the effect that the Christian religion was inconvenient

and dangerous, and as such, should not be permitted in the country. The missionaries were then informed by his majesty that thenceforth they were at liberty to profess their faith in secret, but not to preach it to the people. It was then the true character of these men of God was clearly brought out. Strangers to fear, and ready, if necessary, to die for their faith, they addressed to his majesty the following respectful but courageous answer: "We have not come six thousand leagues to ask permission to become Christians, to perform our duties, and to pray to God in secret. The court, the city, the provinces are aware that we all came hither to preach the Christian religion and to render to the emperor whatever services we are able. The emperors, your majesty's predecessors, but especially your illustrious grandfather, have had our religion examined, not by ignorant persons as those who have accused us during the present and the preceding reign, but by the sovereign tribunals, all of whom after careful examinations and mature deliberation, have pronounced it good, true, and wholly free from all that is evil. They declared that it should not be proscribed, and that the Chinese should not be prohibited embracing it and frequenting its churches. This declaration was confirmed by the emperor and published through all the empire. Since that time our holy religion has not changed. Why then does the criminal tribunal have our Christians imprisoned? Why does it punish them? Why has it placards posted in all the towns to oblige those who have embraced it, to abandon it? Why does it order this in all the provinces? If it be criminal to be a Christian, we are especially culpable, for we exhort the people to embrace Christianity," etc. This was followed by another memorial. The only effect of both was an order not to placard any more the condemnation of the religion. But

as far as the preaching of the faith was concerned, the former decision was adhered to. The emperor was, indeed, willing to retain the religious in his service did they confine themselves exclusively to science and art; for he found them exceedingly useful in adorning his royal abode. Brother Castiglione, whose talent as a painter would have obtained him distinction in any part of the world, was constantly employed in the palace, while Father Benoitt, who was equally remarkable for his practical acquaintance with applied mathematics, left nothing to the emperor to desire in the adornment of the imperial surroundings. Nor again was Father Ganbril as a scientist, a classic scholar, and man of general information, at all inferior to the most learned of the natives. Favorable, however, as these admirable qualities rendered the missionaries to the emperor personally, his majesty still suffered the religion to be persecuted. The persecution was not indeed always general, but depended a good deal on the caprice and prejudices of the local authorities. The grounds of accusation in many instances were as senseless as the persecution was unjust. Amongst other things, the priests were accused of alluring the natives to become Christians, for pay. To rebut so atrocious a calumny, the bishop of the locality made the following admirable reply: "As to inducing any to become Christians for pay, I am far from being guilty of that. It would not be in my power even if I desired, for I receive annually from Europe only what is necessary for my support. The way I induce those to listen to me to become Christians, is by pointing out to them the excellence of the religion. And I do that, simply and artlessly. I deceive no one, I baptize only those who desire it, and even they must desire it earnestly. And that is what all those who know our religion cannot help wishing. China obstinately rejects the faith only because it does not know it. But it

resists in vain, for it will have to accept it, one day or other. Those who live conformably to the law of this holy religion, shall enjoy after their death an eternal felicity, while those who refuse to submit to it cannot avoid falling into an abyss of fire and punishment which shall never end. In fine, neither the greatest rank nor the greatest dignities on earth can save any one from this hell." This noble, fearless response, instead of enlisting the admiration of the pagans, only earned for the prelate five and twenty blows. The old charges of magic and improper relations with their penitents, were again at this time renewed against the missionaries. The foundation, in this instance for the renewal of the charge of magical practices, was the presence of a casket containing the remains of one of the fathers who had died in the odor of sanctity. The presence of the relics, the impure minds and superstitious fears of the ignorant readily construed in the most reprehensible sense. The bones, according to them, were those of infants, from whose skulls filters were decocted for the purpose of engaging the opposite sex in illicit amours. To repel so horrible a charge the religious pointed to the fact that the bones were not those of infants but of an adult, a fact that appeared upon an inspection thereof. The judges accordingly acquitted the missionaries, but the chief magistrate accepted the ruling only for the time being. Meanwhile the enemies of religion were working with the emperor against the interests of the Christians. The result of their efforts was that secret orders were forwarded by his majesty to the governors of the empire to seek out and suppress "the religion of the Lord of Heaven wherever it existed." The immediate consequence of these instructions was very lamentable. Whole communities were presently scattered and their religious endowments confiscated. Churches were every-where committed to the flames, while the Christians themselves were either

thrown into prison or condemned to be tortured. Of those thus apprehended, numbers unhappily apostatized, yea, in some instances, even the majority. On the other hand, many exhibited the most remarkable heroism. Without waiting to be apprehended they proceeded in companies, crucifix in hand, to the tribunal of the mandarins, and made open and unhesitating profession of their holy religion. What is particularly noticeable about this and other persecutions of a kindred character is, that in condemning the doctrine the authorities never pronounced it to be bad. On the contrary they always declared it to be a pure and admirable code, the only plea for condemning it being that it was opposed to the laws of the realm.

At this time the bishop of Chan-Lietchusi, with some others was detained in prison. The sentence of death passed upon the venerable prelate having been confirmed by the emperor, he was led out to punishment on the 26th of May, 1747. With a countenance radiant with joy and expressive of that hope accompanying the faithful discharge of one's religions obligations, the holy bishop went forth to meet his death amid the sobs and prayers of his faithful people. The unbelievers themselves were touched by the solemnity of the scene. On arriving at the place of execution the holy victim turning toward his executioner addressed him thus: "My friend, I am going to heaven, would that thou wert accompanying me." Then taking the posture demanded, the next moment his head was separated from his body. As it was prohibited the Christians to approach the remains, they employed a pagan to gather some of the blood, which they carefully preserved. The effect produced on the man himself by the discharge of this act of benevolence was remarkable in the extreme. For, having been a brigand and idolator he not only abandoned his former manner of life, but even cast from him his idols

and became a convert to Christianity. In the following year six other victims attested to divine truth at the cost of their lives. These were Bishop Tipasa and five priests, all of whom were strangled in prison.

For the next twenty years, up to 1768, the Christians were left unmolested, but at that date, they were again thrown into a state of alarm. This was in consequence of a representation against the religion addressed to the emperor by the president of the tribunal of mathematics. The document which, as the reader will see, is as full of erroneous assertions as it is remarkable for hatred of the unbelievers, is as follows: "Tsi-Tchung-Go offers respectfully to your majesty the following with the view of learning your majesty's pleasure. I have examined the various religions of the empire because they pervert the people, and I am convinced that on that ground the Christian religion more than any other deserves to be entirely and for ever proscribed. It does not recognise divinities or spirits or ancestors; it is nothing but trumpery, superstition, and lies. I have often heard of perquisitions being made against it in the provinces, but I have not learned that anything has yet been done at the capital. Therefore, this perverse religion is extending itself, the ignorant embrace it and adhere to it with a constancy which cannot be denied. Fearing lest the Europeans who for a long time have been members of the tribunal of mathematics, may have seduced some of their associate members, I have made the necessary enquiries and find that two and twenty of the mandarins, instead of being sensible of the honors conferred upon them, in being permitted to wear the insignia of their rank, have so far forgotten what is due to their high estate as not to blush at professing this superstitious faith. When the heart of man has no rein to restrain it, it becomes immediately the

sport of error: vices take root therein and every-where produce desolation. The other tribunals are doubtless infected in like manner. It is time then and of the highest importance to put an end to this state of affairs, to separate the good from the bad. It is with this view that I pray your majesty to order, that the twenty-two mandarins of my court be handed over to the proper authorities, to be judged according to the laws, and that means be taken by enquiries and punishments to strike at the root of this evil. I await respectfully your majesty's order.—The fourth of the tenth moon, that is to say, the 12th of November, Le-Kien-Long 33, that is, 1768."

The emperor allowed himself to be influenced by the foregoing and the mandarins were summoned before the criminal court and condemned according to the laws. In passing judgment, the court took occasion to rule that the community be informed that all who were Christians were required to voluntarily inform of themselves under the severest penalties. This elicited a response from a quarter entirely unsuspected. The city of Pekin contained at that time about two millions of inhabitants: it was divided into the Tartar and Chinese quarters. Over one of these the mandarin, Ma, a Christian, presided as chief of police. On the publication of the edict commanding all who were believers to report themselves to the authorities, Ma deemed it his duty to conform to the law, and presented himself accordingly before the proper tribunal. On the 31st of December he appeared before the governor and made the following declaration: "To obey the order of the court of criminal procedure, I have come to declare that I am a Christian and my ancestors for three generations have been the same. For they embraced the religion under Leao-Tong. I and my family know that the Christian religion is the true one and that it is necessary to follow it. In this

we are all of one mind and determined to do so." This intrepid soldier of Christ was then handed over to the judges of the criminal court. The result was not difficult to foresee. Having firmly adhered to his holy resolve he was deprived of his position, stripped of all the insignia of his rank, loaded with chains and cast into prison. Menaces, insults, solicitations, and promises were all alike employed in vain, to shake his constancy. In fine, the authorities, unwilling to proceed to the utmost extreme in his case, on the plea that he had expressed his regret for having violated the emperor's orders, released him from prison and restored him to his rank.

From this till 1772, the Christians suffered considerable annoyance at the hands of the authorities, but in that year an edict was issued declaring the Christian religion contrary to the laws of the realm, and prohibiting its existence. A calamity of another kind was now in store for the country. In 1775, the brief containing the suppression of the Society of the Jesuits arrived at Pekin, and the missionaries found themselves necessitated to submit to the will of the sovereign pontiff. But divine providence was not wholly unmindful of the people's requirements. In a manner which human foresight could not have predicted, heaven was preparing to fill the places of those whose zeal in the cause of truth had earned for them the martyr's crown, or, who in obedience to superior authority, were obliged to quit the country. Under the pressure of the French revolution, several devoted ecclesiastics had to abandon their native land. Of these, many chose China as the field of their future labors. One of them was quickly arrested and cast into prison, where he expired on the 13th of May, 1797. The others by a careful precaution, were enabled to exercise to a considerable extent the duties of their holy profession, and thus provided moderately for the

wants of the people. This partial liberty existed up to 1804, when an edict of persecution was again launched against the faithful. It had its origin in the imaginary idea, that the Europeans were about to attack and take the country. This vain supposition arose in consequence of the interception of some letters, which were forwarded by the missionaries from Pekin to Macao, and which were construed by the authorities into a conspiracy on the part of the Europeans for the invasion of the empire. An edict, to which was attached the penalty of death, was accordingly issued by the emperor Kia-King, against all the masters of religion, except those employed on the tribunal of mathematics at Pekin. As a first effect, the college of Lo-Hang-Keon, directed by the bishop of Zila, was taken and burned by the populace, but the venerable prelate succeeded in effecting his escape. His coadjutor, however, the bishop of Tabarca, was not so fortunate, for he was arrested on the 18th of May, 1815. After a few months imprisonment, he was sentenced on the 14th of September, to be beheaded immediately. Thirty of his flock who had been imprisoned with him for the faith, were made to accompany him to the place of execution, with the view of intimidating them into a renunciation of their holy religion. But the authorities were wholly mistaken. Indeed, they could not have taken a more admirable way of establishing the natives in the faith; for, stimulated by the constancy of their venerable pastor, their courage was tenfold increased. Hence, when required under pain of being strangled, to abandon the faith, they all unanimously rejected the unholy alternative. Seeing their firmness, the authorities relented, to the extent of sending the condemned into exile. Others were not treated so leniently, but were made to pay with their lives for their adherence to divine truth.

The effect of this persecution on the vicariate apostolic

of See-Tchnouan was most deplorable. The destruction of the college, the dispersion of the seminarists, the martyrdom of several of the clergy and of the bishop and his coadjutor, were amongst these sad results. But God, who ever watches over his own, did not suffer the people to be tried beyond their strength. In 1820 a new bishop was appointed to the diocese in the person of Monseigneur Fontana with Monseigneur Perochian as coadjutor. These devoted prelates set themselves at once to work to fill up the vacanies in the sacerdotal ranks, caused by the recent persecutions. Their work, indeed, was an arduous and tedious one, for on account of the dangers attending the ministry and the slender nature of the resources at the command of the bishops, few were willing to volunteer their services and fewer still to furnish the means requisite for preparing them for the priesthood in that distant land. Meantime, the work of persecution went on in the country, the ministers of divine truth shedding their blood in testimony of the doctrine they preached. But what was most difficult for them to bear was the occasional apostasy of many whom they had brought to a knowledge of the truth. Thus Father Clet writing from his prison in 1820 says: "Fathers Lamio, Chen, myself, and a great number of Christians have been condemned by the grand mandarin on the 1st of February. As the eating of pork is the sign of apostasy all were supplied therewith, of which the unfortunate creatures partook and in consequence were dismissed. Subsequently twenty-three others were brought forward, but with an entirely different result; for all these persevered with the greatest constancy in the profession of our holy faith and were accordingly remanded to prison to await the decision of the emperor." The writer goes on to state how Fathers Chen and Clet were also remanded to prison to await in like manner the emperor's pleasure.

That was not long in being made known. The mandarin in communicating it merely said: "You have corrupted too many of our people and the emperor wants your life." "Most willingly," answered the intrepid minister, and from that moment he thought of nothing but meeting his God, a desire that was not left long ungratified, for he was strangled on the 18th of April 1820. Six years later, there being no European missionary in the country, and no Chinese being permitted according to the laws to possess any church property, the government took possession of all the goods appertaining to the missions.

To avoid the persecuting acts of the government, and at the same time, to provide for the wants of the mission, some of the native priests opened a little seminary in Tartary, in 1826, for the education of aspirants to the ecclesiastical state. Four years later, 1830, Father Imberl opened another of the same kind in Thibet. The zealous efforts of these earnest men were not without their fruit, for, in 1840, there were in the three provinces of See-Honan, Koner, Tchon and Yon-Nan as many as 60,000 Christians, 2 colleges, 60 schools for boys, 119 for girls, 900 religious, 30 Chinese priests, and 12 European missionaries. Besides, there were six other missions containing a Christian population of 50,000 souls. The Congregation of the Missions having been suppressed in Portugal and the missions not being recruited any longer from that quarter, the Propaganda found it necessary, at that date, to hand over the Portuguese missions in China, to the Vincentian Fathers. In consequence of that arrangement, a population of 400,000 souls were placed under the care of these worthy men. The charge indeed was a perilous one. In 1839, Father Perboyre fell into the hands of the authorities, and in his arrest and death, bore a strong resemblance to his divine Master, whom he served so well. Accompanied by a

catechist, he was proceeding through the country when he encountered a body of soldiers. His attendant, seeing his opportunity enquired if they were not in search of a European, and being informed that they were, he demanded to know how much they would give. Thirty taels, replied the officer in command. Then pointing to the disguised missionary, "There," said he, "is your man." "How much will you give me," said Judas, "and I will betray him to you?" The resemblance is very striking. Little did the holy priest contemplate, at the moment, the fearful ordeal he would be made to undergo before giving his life for his divine Master. At the first interrogatory before the chief mandarin, he was required to kneel upon chains, his thumbs and hair being tied by stout cords fastened from above to prevent him from falling in case he swooned. A plank was next placed over the calves of his legs, and press upon at either extremity by a couple of stalwart men who employed all their strength, the object being to extort from the sufferer a word or expression of apostasy, or of information regarding the retreat of his brethren in the ministry. But though this terrible ordeal was continued, during the greater part of a day, not a word or syllable, could be wrested from the noble soldier of Christ that could in any manner compromise his faith, or betray his companions. Of him it might indeed be truly said that he had vanquished the powers of hell. But this was only the commencement; others and still greater sufferings were in store for this great champion of truth. At his second interrogatory, he was ordered to trample on the crucifix. It is needless to say that he instantly spurned the foul proposition. "How," replied he, "could I thus treat the image of my God. It is he who has created me, and who came from heaven to save me"—saying which he pressed the sacred symbol fervently to his lips, and bathed it with his

tears. This was a signal for a renewal of torture, but with only the same result as in the former instance. Another device was then employed by his enemies. On the floor of the hall where he was to appear for the third time before his judges, was painted a number of crosses whereon he was ordered to walk. This he resolutely refused to do, when an idol was presented for his adoration. "Never," indignantly answered the holy man, "if you want my life take it, but, to adore this idol I never shall." Exasperated beyond all bounds at being thus thwarted in all his efforts, the presiding judge, turning to the Christians who were present, commanded them, under pain of torture, to fall upon the missionary and tear out his beard and hair, in sign of contempt and ignominy. Seeing the people unwilling and desirous of saving them from the fury of the mandarin, even at the cost of inexplicable torture to himself, the noble-hearted martyr exhorted his children to do as commanded. The mind sickens at the idea that these miserable creatures, forgetting all that they owed to him as their Father and friend in Christ, did as commanded; fell upon the holy martyr as their victim, and brutally tore out his hair and beard as if he were their deadliest enemy!

At the third interrogatory, this generous man was condemned to receive a hundred lashes, for having refused to trample upon the symbol of man's salvation, and while his body was bathed in blood from the terrible laceration, he was ordered to array himself in his sacerdotal garments. Reflecting for a moment and considering how still more like his divine Master a compliance with that demand would render him, he obeyed, and became in consequence an object of ridicule for the rabble, the multitude crying out at the top of their voice: "Behold the god Fo! Behold the god Fo!" To further mark his contempt for the minister of God, the viceroy had him branded on the forehead with

the words "Sie kiao ho chang," or bonze of a false religion Thus outraged and dishonored, the glorious martyr was loaded with chains and cast into a fetid dungeon, where he had for companions the vilest of the community. Even this did not appease the mandarin's rage; the fact was, that the viceroy and his satellites feared the man of God, though thus reduced to the utmost extreme of misery and suffering. The superstitious nature of the people magnified to an alarming extent, the poor sufferer's powers, and it was thought that by the art of magic, in which he was considered an adept, he might at any moment escape out of their hands and perform the most terrible deeds. To prevent such a contingency, the venerable sufferer was made to drink great draughts of fuming dog's blood, such being regarded as the most efficacious antidote against the exercise of magical powers. In fine, the imperial edict condemning the martyr to be executed, was received on the 11th of September, 1840, and shortly after he was led out to be executed. It was an affecting but most consoling sight to behold this true soldier of Christ led out to death. The strong resemblance in his case to the Son of God, made his martyrdom doubly precious and significative to the faithful. Arrayed in a red garment, with his hands bound by cords, and holding a reed reaching above his head to which was attached the sentence he was to undergo, with bare feet, and in company with five malefactors, the glorious soldier of Christ went forth to meet his doom. Arrived at the place of execution, his five companions were respectively attached to the stakes and beheaded in his presence. Father Perboyre's time had then arrived, but his execution was not to be by decapitation; he was to be strangled. To render this even still more painful, the executioner purposely avoided completing his work as speedily as he might. After a vigorous twist the cord was

relaxed and the sufferer left to undergo the horror of a protracted martyrdom. Again the same operation was repeated, and it was only at the third attempt that what might have been accomplished at first was effected, and the sufferer released from pain. While still breathing, an attendant approached and showed his contempt for the martyr by kicking him violently in the stomach. The little objects used by him during his captivity, were obtained by the Christians and are now religiously preserved at the at the principal house of the Order in Paris, whither they were transported from China, in 1841.

While the events related above were taking place in China proper, equally severe were the sufferings endured by the Christians in Cochin-China. The method of disposing of the sufferers in this case was even more cruel still. Instead of being beheaded or strangled, they were ordinarily trampled under the feet of elephants or nailed to planks, where they were left to expire in the utmost agony. Yea, while undergoing all the tortures of a protracted crucifixion, pointed iron instruments were violently forced under their nails with the view of extorting from them some word or sign of apostasy. In other instances, particularly those of the females, the hands were bandaged tightly, dipped in oil, and set on fire. The sufferings thus endured, in these our days, by these glorious champions of the Cross, have been equal to anything undergone by the soldiers of Christ in the primitive ages.

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